

# Kurdish as a Stateless Language in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract:**

This article discusses the status of Kurdish as a stateless language in the U.S. By using intersectionality as the theoretical framework, the article argues that the educational structures of power converge, at Kurds home countries and abroad, to create a set of conditions under which the stateless Kurdish language exists, always in a kind of invisible but persistent multiple jeopardy. The article shows how Kurdish in the U.S., similar to the Middle East, has been merely tolerated, and finds itself excluded from opportunities reserved for languages that enjoy privileges pertaining to statehood, such as Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which have been fostered within academic departments of Middle Eastern and Near Eastern studies, Iranian, Arabic, and Turkish studies. The article examines how available the frameworks of

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institutions such as the American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the National Council for Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL), which were initially founded to represent foreign, critical, and less commonly taught language in the U.S., are insufficient for offsetting a stateless language's intersection and multiple axes of marginalization, statelessness, suppression, discrimination, and soft and hard linguicide. This intersectional status of Kurdish sheds light on examining the wider implications of stateless languages and demands a total recasting and rethinking of existing policy frameworks within federal and higher education institutions regarding stateless languages. Finally, the article further maps the conversations within the social sciences about intersectionality as an analytic tool for thinking about operations and interlocking systems of power, here applied to a language for the first time.

**Keywords:** stateless languages, less commonly taught languages, double minority languages, intersectionality, Kurdish in the U.S., language policy, and negative and positive language rights

## **Introduction:**

### **I. Intersectionality and stateless languages**

Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) in the U.S. foreign language educational context is a designation used for “marginalized” languages other than English and the four Commonly Taught Languages (CTLs): Spanish, French, German, and Italian (Johnson, 1998). Unlike CTLs, LCTLs are not regularly taught at all levels of education in the U.S. The situation of LCTLs in the U.S. could be compared to the situation of minorities in American society. However, there are languages that are subject to two or more minority classifications. Stateless languages are the most obvious examples of this category. The situation of stateless languages in the U.S. could be compared to the situation of double or multiple minority individuals in American society. Similar to LCTLs, stateless languages are also not regularly taught at all levels of education in the U.S. However, unlike statehood LCTLs associated with a particular country or state, stateless languages lack any promotion and support from official and semi-official institutions of their home country, as well as in the U.S. These and other axes of marginalization have placed stateless languages in a unique intersectional situation, comparable to particular positionality of black women, which has been discussed in the context of the U.S. within the framework of intersectionality.

Intersectionality<sup>2</sup> emerged in the late 1980s as an analytic frame capable of attending to the particular positionality of black women and other women of color both in civil rights law and within the civil rights movements. “Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term *intersectionality* has become the key analytic framework through which feminist scholars in various fields talk about the structural identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Cooper 2015). Building on the works of such scholars, Cooper (2015) put the term intersectionality in an “account of interlocking systems of power and oppression, arguing that intersectionality is not an account of personal identity but one of power.” She has further mapped the conversations within the social sciences about intersectionality as a research methodology. As a “traveling theory” and a tool to counter “multiple oppressions” and “multiple axes of marginalized identities and groups,” intersectionality has been used in different disciplines and geographies to demonstrate the broader utility of the term beyond its import for black women, not just as theory but as praxis too (Smith, 1998). In this article, I utilize an intersectional framework to better understand the multiple and layered disadvantages faced in the learning and teaching of stateless Kurdish language. This approach specifically helps us understand the status of the

<sup>2</sup> This article draws substantially on Cooper (2015) regarding intersectionality.

stateless Kurdish language, not only compared to CTLs, but also compared to privileged LCTLs with statehood in general and those of the region: Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. In addition, it is useful tool for exposing the operations of educational structures of power that directly or indirectly impact stateless languages at home and abroad.

The article first gives a quick picture of the current status of the Kurdish language in the Middle East. Then it explains the history and the dynamics that led to Kurdish being spoken in the U.S. It sheds light on how the governmental, institutional, and curricular discriminations and obstacles in the Kurds' countries of origin have affected the status of Kurdish in the U.S. How does the case of Kurdish in the U.S. shed light on the wider implications of stateless languages and speak to the broader field of Middle Eastern diaspora studies? Finally, the article aims to understand if and to what level departments such as Middle Eastern Studies, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Central Eurasian Departments, and Iranian, Arabic, and Turkish Studies among others, and associations and councils such as ACTFL and NCOLCTL among other similar organizations, have contributed, and could contribute in the future to enhancing and maintain the status of Kurdish and other stateless languages in the U.S. Does the "single-axis" framework of NCOLCTL (which, for example, gathers all languages of the world, except English, Spanish, French,

German, and Italian, under a single umbrella; LCTLs) sufficient for the “intersectional” experience of the stateless languages such as Kurdish, Uyghur, Berber/Amazigh, and Balochi, among others? The article has used a variety of methodologies, from individual interviews and email communications to text analysis.

## **II. The nation, language, and the script**

### **The Kurds**

Kurdish is the language of the Kurds, who are often referred to as one of the largest nations in the world without a state of their own (Van Bruinessen, 1992).<sup>3</sup> For centuries most Kurds have lived in their traditional homeland called Kurdistan (lit. ‘the land of the Kurds), straddling four countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. In recent decades, the Kurds have succeeded in establishing autonomously governed region within Iraq and most recently within Syria. There are about 30–35 million Kurds worldwide. About one million Kurds also live in the Caucasus (particularly Armenia and Azerbaijan) and the Levant (particularly Lebanon and Israel) (Sheyholislami & Sharifi, 2016, p.77). The population of the Kurds in diasporic communities of the West has been estimated at more than one million (Hassanpour & Mojab, 2005). France, Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, and Germany in Europe,

<sup>3</sup> For the sociological understanding of statelessness alongside the legal understanding of the issue, see: Sköld 2019; Eliassi 2016; Weissbrodt and Collins 2006.

Australia, Canada, and the U.S. form the host countries for the Kurds.

### **The Kurdish language**

Kurdish is an Indo-European macro-language consisting of five major dialect groups: Northern Kurdish (henceforth Kurmanji), Central Kurdish (henceforth Sorani), Southern Kurdish (Kirmashani, Kalhuri, and Laki among others), Hawrami/Gurani, and Zazaki (Haig & Ergin, 2014). Due to the large number of the speakers of Kurmanji and Sorani, and the main body of available Kurdish literature having been written in one of these two dialects, they have been standardized in the sense that they have numerous monolingual and multilingual dictionaries, multimedia, grammar and style books, and are the language of schools and universities where permitted (Sheyholislami & Sharifi, 2016, p.78). The main contribution to this process came since 1992 when Kurds started to run their own autonomous region in Northern Iraq. The diasporic communities in the West, especially in the Scandinavian countries, played an enormous role in standardization and modernization of Kurmanji (Kreyenbroek, 2005). Today, both Kurmanji and Sorani Kurdish is stable and developing, whereas other dialects of Kurdish are decreasing, and Hawrami and Zazaki having been moved toward the status of in dangerous languages.

## **The Kurdish alphabet and script**

In addition to speaking different varieties, Kurds also use different scripts and alphabets for writing Kurdish. Being ruled by different states within different socio-cultural contexts has added to the complexity of this issue. The Kurds have used at least four different scripts for writing Kurdish. Kurds in Iraq and Iran have been using a modified Perso-Arabic script for all Kurdish dialects. Historically, Kurdish literati in Syria and Turkey have also used this same script; however, in the early decades of the twentieth century they adopted a Latin-based Kurdish script under the influence of Turkish language reforms which replaced the Perso-Arabic-based Ottoman script with Latin-based Modern Turkish script. The early grammatical works by the orientalist also impacted this process (Rhea, 1872/1880, pp.118-155). Living in the Soviet Union at the time, the Kurds of the Caucasus (i.e. Armenia) employed Armenian and Cyrillic in their writing, however, they have now switched to the Latin-based Kurdish writing system. The major difference today in writing Kurdish is between the way Kurdish (both Sorani and Kurmanji) is written in Iraq and Iran, in modified Perso-Arabic-based alphabet, and among other Kurds in Syria, Armenia, and Turkey, which is Latin-based. This difference in writing systems, as well as some other specific characters in writing and sound systems, cause challenges for the teaching of the Kurdish language at home



and especially in diasporic communities where Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan come together (Sheyholislami & Sharifi, 2016, p.79). There are challenges associated with offering Kurdish classes that favor a single dialect versus offering both dialects. The first case showcases the problems associated with unidialectalism, standardization, and officialization of the Kurdish dialects within the Kurdish question (Chyet, 2018). The second case requires additional resources, teaching materials, and instructors.

### **III. The status of the Kurdish language in the Middle East**

In Turkey, the use of Kurdish in any form was strictly forbidden in the Turkish Republic from its inception. As a result of several decades of hard and soft linguistic<sup>4</sup>, most Kurds in Turkey cannot read or write their own language, and those who do have learned it outside schools, often with great risk to themselves (Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas & Chyet, 1996). After being banned from public use for about seventy years, the language has enjoyed some tolerance at the end of twentieth century. In 1992, the ban on Kurdish in public was relaxed. In 2009, Mardin Artuklu University, introduced university-level language courses in Kurdish and other minority languages. In 2012, lessons in the Kurdish language

<sup>4</sup> For further information on hard and soft linguistic, see: Salih 2019.

were allowed in schools as an elective language, with the conditions of funding and enough students. In recent years, some private Kurdish classes are being offered. A few universities offer credits in Kurdish language and literature and several K-12 schools in Kurdish areas offer Kurdish courses as an elective language. Kurdish publishing, such as *Avesta* in Istanbul, has flourished and there is a 24/7 state monopoly-run TV station, TRT Kurdî. However, Turkey's Post-Coup Crackdown targets the Kurdish language, where private Kurdish schools were shut down. Until today, Kurdish in Turkey remains a double minority language without any official status, educational rights, or any considerable state promotion and support (Zeydanlioğlu, 2012; Arslan, 2015).

In Iran, and during the short-lived Autonomous Republic of Mahabad (January to December 1946), Kurdish was the official language of the republic and Kurdish language and literature enjoyed a great deal of patronage, true linguistic freedom and promotion. From the collapse of the republic until the 1979 Islamic Revolution, expressions of Kurdish identity were highly discouraged (Sheyholislami, 2019). Since 1979 Islamic Revolution the Kurdish language in Iran is in a state that Sheyholislami (2012) has described as “controlled and restricted tolerance.” As recently as July 14, 2020, a Kurdish language teacher was sentenced to ten years in prison by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Courts for teaching her mother

tongue (Khezri, 2020). To the present day, Kurdish has no official status, nor has it benefited from any notable state promotion or support. Even the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, describes Kurdish and other non-Persian/Farsi languages of Iran with colonizing terms such as “regional and tribal languages” (Ibid). According to many scholars of the field such as Jim Cummins, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, and Sheyholislami, Kurdish in Iran is endangered so long as it is not a medium of instruction, especially in the early years of education (see: Kalan 2016; Sheyholislami 2012). Today, Kurdish remains subject to assimilation and soft linguicide policies within the Iranian educational system (see: Soleimani & Mohammadpour, 2019).

Until the last decade of the twentieth century, the Kurds in Iraq enjoyed only about ten years of true linguistic freedom and positive linguistic rights, and then only intermittently. This includes a couple of years during the short-lived Kingdom of Kurdistan led by Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji (1878-1956), which lasted from 1922 until 1924, and during the establishment of the Republic of Iraq, particularly from 1970 to 1977 (Salih, 2019, p.40). Despite official recognition, Iraq under the Ba’ath Party pursued a long-term policy of Arabization and de-ethnicization of the Kurds. The soft linguicidal policies eventually exploded into physical genocide with the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s. (Hassanpour 1992,

pp.119-125; Salih, 2019). However, the setting up of a more or less autonomous security zone in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1992 initially led to a great deal of literary activity, with a strong focus on linguistic, political, and social issues. In that same year, Kurdish became the official language in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2005, Kurdish was enshrined in the Iraqi constitution as one of the official languages of that country. While Kurdish is enjoying a great deal of promotion and sponsorship in Northern/Iraqi Kurdistan, the recognition of Kurdish in the country's 2005 constitution, is more symbolic than practical on the federal level (Sheyholislami 2019, p.106).

The use of Kurdish in any form was strictly forbidden in the Syrian Arab Republic from its inception in 1946, and became even stricter after the establishment of Ba'ath party of Syria in 1963. Mother tongue education has never been authorized by any Syrian government (Hassanpour 1992, p.333). Since 1963, school geography texts have dropped all mention of the Kurdish minority in Syria (Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas & Chyet, 1996). Kurdish language faces a soft and hard linguicide in Assadist state. Following the Arab Spring, Kurds were in control of most of the Kurdish areas where the Kurdish language is now the medium of education, communication, and media. In 2016, the University of Rojava was founded in Qamishli. The university offers programs for primary school education and Kurdish language and literature.

Currently, Kurdish is taught in all schools across the Kurdish area. The number of Kurdish language teachers has been estimated to be 1,325 in Jazira, 930 in Afrin, and 400 in Kobani.<sup>5</sup> However the Kurdification of the educational system suffers from the lack of financial resources, textbooks and teaching materials, teachers and teacher training programs, and a situation of continuing internal and external wars and uncertain future.

What we can articulate here from the status of Kurdish language in the Middle East is that the status of Kurdish has improved whenever the Kurdish language could benefit from the state's support and promotion. In Iraq, setting up an autonomous security zone in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1992, the fall of Saddam Hussain' regime in 2003, and the unifying of Kurdish province under Kurdistan Regional Government led to a great deal of activities in the field of Kurdish language and culture. In Iran, Kurdish flourished due to the support it received from the 1946 short-lived autonomous Republic of Mahabad. After the collapse of the republic, the status of Kurdish declined. Most recently, and since 2012, the foundation of Rojava led to a great deal of activities in the field of Kurdish language in Syria. Similar process has been observed in diasporic communities in Europe and the U.S. The

<sup>5</sup> <https://thekurdishproject.org/history-kurdish-language-rojava/> Accessed February 23, 2020.

diasporic Kurdish communities in Scandinavian communities, played a significant role in the standardization and modernization of Kurmanji. The Kurdish community enjoyed considerable support from the European countries, particularly Sweden. However, the European and North American countries have had different approaches toward Kurdish.

#### **IV. Kurdish in the Diaspora**

As a result of a cumulative history of genocide, discrimination, and other forms of systemic denial and assimilation by the central governments of the region, Kurds have found refuge in many countries around the world, with the hope of practicing their culture and speaking their mother tongue without the fear of persecution, imprisonment, or even death (Arpacik 2019, p.44). Diasporic communities in Europe, starting with France in the 1950s, followed by other European countries (especially in Scandinavia), have been most hospitable to Kurdish language. Of all the Kurdish dialects, Kurmanji has enjoyed the greatest patronage.

European countries have had different approaches toward Kurdish. Minority K-12 students in some of these countries enjoy the right to receive one or more hours of teaching in their native languages as a subject. However, budget cuts in some of these countries and the backlash against multiculturalism have ended many of these programs and are threatening the

remaining programs. In addition, several European countries have demonstrated a strong willingness to appease states of the Middle East at the cost of diasporic Kurds. As in their home countries, Middle Eastern Kurds are registered by their country of origin (Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas & Chyet, 1996). Even though a majority of the European Kurds live in Germany, the status of Kurdish language remains insignificant, with only a few collective courses on Kurdish at the Freie Universität in Berlin. In Canada, education is under provincial government jurisdiction, and funding is usually provided for a few hours per week of “heritage language” training or Aboriginal. Kurdish language classes for K-12 students are administered separately on weekends. Many of these programs are threatened by budget cuts and the minimum enrollment requirements. For example, the Kurdish community scattered throughout a vast country cannot supply the minimum of 25 students required by the Province of Ontario for the government to offer two and a half hours of teaching per week in their language (Ibid).

The status of Kurdish in Sweden is an exception. Kurdish language courses for K-12 students are part of the curriculum of the school as opposed to being offered as merely a collective language or during the weekends. These classes have therefore received more recognition and legitimacy in the eyes of students, since it is part of the school program and is taught in

the same school environment as other subjects. Additionally, the Kurdish school children's mother tongue is registered in these schools if they want to claim their being Kurdish rather than being forced to identify themselves as Arabs, Iranian, or Turks (Ibid). The status of Kurdish in post-secondary Sweden is also an exception. For example, Uppsala University offers not only Kurdish language and literature courses, but also Kurdish as a subject of several other courses, and a few classes taught partly through the medium of Kurdish. The Kurdish studies program also contributes to the training of scholars specializing in Kurdish language and culture. Various government agencies have funded the publication of no less than a dozen primary textbooks. Many libraries have collections of books and a few magazines in the Kurdish language. They even contain a considerable number of children's stories that have been translated into Kurdish. The Swedish International Development Authority has funded the publication of these children's books for use back home in Iraqi Kurdistan. Some funding was also provided for dubbing children's cartoons on video (Ibid). With very modest government support, Sweden has emerged as an active center of teaching and learning Kurdish, Kurdish publication, and cultural activity. This kind of support has bypassed the strict limitations and prohibitions on Kurmanji Kurdish in Turkey and Syria and has contributed to its standardization and



modernization (Kreyenbroek, 2005). The status of Kurdish in Sweden, shows that language can enjoy a great deal of development even in diaspora when it receives positive language rights, promotion, and support from the host countries. On the other hand, the status of Kurdish in many other western countries shows that mere tolerance, without promotion and support, is not enough for developing and maintaining the status of a stateless language.

#### **V. Kurds and the Kurdish language in the U.S.**

##### **Kurds in the U.S.**

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, the U.S. has witnessed five waves of Kurdish immigrants. The first wave arrived in 1976–1977 following the collapse of the Kurdish revolt in Iraq, after the Shah of Iran and the U.S. withdrew their support from the Kurdish rebellion which they alone had supported. As a result, thousands of Kurdish people fled to avoid tragedy and some of them sought exile in the U.S. Almost all of these Iraqi Kurdish immigrants settled in Tennessee, Texas, California, Washington D.C., and the Dakotas (Karimi, 2010). The second wave of immigration took place when the 1979 Iranian Revolution occurred. The majority of Iranian Kurds opposed the theocratic regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On August 20, 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa authorizing a barbaric repression of Iran's Kurdish people. Simultaneously the surge of massacres

and bombings of the Kurdish cities began.<sup>6</sup> As a result, many Iranian Kurds fled the country and some sought exile in the U.S. Almost all of the second-wave immigrants settled in Los Angeles, California. The third and largest wave were the survivors of a genocidal campaign, known as al-Anfal, which was initiated by Saddam Hussein to eradicate the Kurds in Northern Iraq. The campaign reached its peak in 1988 when civilians were gassed by chemical weapons in the Kurdish town of Halabja. According to Human Rights Watch (1993), 50,000 to 100,000 Kurdish people were killed as a result of the campaign. Some Kurdish officials have claimed the figure could be as high as 182,000.<sup>7</sup> Thousands of Kurds crossed the borders to seek shelter; about 9,000 settled in the U.S. between 1991–2. The fourth wave took place between 1996–8, and most of this wave consisted of interpreters and translators who worked with the U.S. Army in the Middle East, and whose lives were threatened later by Saddam Hussein because of the link they had with the U.S. Army, and the support they were receiving from Western agencies. About 6,000 Kurds were airlifted from the Turkish border to Guam for refugee screening purposes before they reached the mainland several months later (Talmadge, 1997; Pedigo, 2009). This group

<sup>6</sup> [http://fa.kurdistanukurd.com/?p=19954&fbclid=IwAR1e0bhkMpQrLyd1b-JA5dvf1ok1vttDH\\_D34SGTrcQpgQVRN7dXSivDrIY](http://fa.kurdistanukurd.com/?p=19954&fbclid=IwAR1e0bhkMpQrLyd1b-JA5dvf1ok1vttDH_D34SGTrcQpgQVRN7dXSivDrIY) Accessed February 12, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq501/events\\_anfal.html](https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq501/events_anfal.html) Accessed February 5, 2020.

mainly settled in Tennessee and Virginia. The fifth and final wave came to the U.S. after the Islamic State's genocide against the primarily Kurmanji-speaking Yazidis. Close to 3,000 of them are settled in Nebraska<sup>8</sup>.

### **Status of Kurdish language in the U.S.**

The earliest interest in Kurdish language among Americans goes back to Christian missionaries, who studied it to communicate with the local Christian Kurds of the region, translate the Bible, and reach out to the Kurds. In 1856, part of the Bible was translated into Kurmanji (Bagster, 1848, p.69). Ever since, Kurdish Bible studies have been maintained and mapped by American missionaries such as Samuel Rhea and L. Fossum who shared an interest in developing Kurdish language books and glossaries. In 1869, Rhea, the missionary of the A.B.C.F.M in Kurdistan, presented a "Brief Grammar and Vocabulary of the Kurdish Language" to the American Oriental Society. In 1919, Fossum wrote *A Practical Kurdish Grammar*, which included a comprehensive grammatical explanation, examples of poetry and short stories, a sample translation of the Bible into Kurdish, and a glossary. In 1958, Ernest McCarus published *A Kurdish Grammar*. In 1967, the University of Michigan published five volumes on Kurdish Essays, Newspapers, Grammar, Short Stories, and a Dictionary

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/terrorized-by-isis-yazidi-refugees-find-welcoming-community-in-nebraska> Accessed February 3, 2020.

by J. Abdulla and McCarus. In 1967, Margaret Kahn, wrote her PhD dissertation at the University of Michigan on Kurdish linguistics (Kahn, 1976; Gunter, 2018). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there have been some activities on Kurdish language, mainly in the field of publication (see: Thackston undated; Chyet 2002; Ekici 2009; Khezri 2022).

These publishing activities have been followed by some initiatives in the field of teaching Kurdish in the U.S. Generally speaking, there are two types of Kurdish language classes in the U.S.: non-profit community-based classes, and classes that have been offered/sponsored by federal grants and institutions of higher education. An example from the first group is a community-based course in San Diego, which lasted for a period of two years in the early 2000s (Sheyholislami & Sharifi, 2016, p.88). These classes are being offered during the evenings or on weekends, mainly as non-credit Kurdish classes, and receive no funds from the federal government or institutions of higher education. In addition to these types of classes, Kurdish has been taught in a few institutions and universities in the U.S., both during the academic year and as a part of summer language workshops. According to the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA),<sup>9</sup> there have been three post-secondary Kurdish programs in the

<sup>9</sup> <https://carla.umn.edu/index.html> Accessed February 23, 2020.

U.S.: The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey CA, and Nashville State Community College. In 2006, Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) became the first University in North America to offer classes in Kurmanji. In 2021, University of Central Florida became the most recent university to offer a Sorani Kurdish language course. However, these and similar other programs are currently discontinued, mainly due to lack of funding and the minimum enrollment.

As the Kurdish diaspora looks for a place for their language in a society that already has its own educational system, they are experiencing new struggles and obstacles, that are unique to stateless languages, in addition to the specific challenges they have experienced at home for centuries. One pioneering text that allowed intersectionality to be conceptualized and acknowledged, was Mary Church Terrell's autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (1948). Her opening lines read, "This is the story of a colored woman living in a white world. It cannot possibly be like a story written by a white woman. A white woman has only one handicap to overcome—that of sex. I have two—both sex and race. I belong to the only group in this country, which has two such huge obstacles to surmount. Colored men have only one—that of race" (Terrell, 2005, p.29). Assuming the privilege of the white male, Terrell compares herself to both white women and black men. She

argues that “two such huge obstacles” constitute a “double-handicap” of race and sex (p. 29). In 1970, extending Terrell’s concept of the “double-handicap,” Frances Beale argues that black women are caught in a kind of “double jeopardy” of being both black and female. She describes “the black woman in America ... as a ‘slave of a slave’” (Beale, 1995, p.148). In the late 1980s, Deborah King revisits Beale’s concept of double jeopardy and Beverly Lindsay’s concept of triple jeopardy, which attempts more explicitly to account for class. King argues that these frameworks fall into the trap of taking an “additive approach” that “ignor[es] the fact that racism, sexism, and classism constitute three, interdependent control systems,” something that could be better captured in a term like *multiple jeopardy*. “Multiple,” she argues, refers “not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well” (1986, p.47).

Similar to the black women’s experience, the case of stateless Kurdish language cannot possibly be like the case of those LCTLs that enjoy privileges pertaining to statehood. There are multiple handicaps and layers of disadvantages that pile up when it comes to stateless Kurdish language in the U.S. By and large, the Kurdish question has primarily been approached with the lenses of political, historical, and most recently gender studies. This centralization of politics and history has marginalized language and literature. One can easily

find hundreds of academic resources on Kurdish politics and history but struggle to find those few notable resources devoted to Kurdish language and literature.<sup>10</sup> Even the limited body of materials for teaching the Kurdish language has various shortcomings. One of the experienced Kurdish teachers who has been teaching the language in various institutions in the U.S. for the past ten years, states: “While the outdated grammar books are specifically targeted for linguists interested in comparative linguistics or grammatical and linguistic analysis of the Kurdish language and ethnography, more recent textbooks suffer from numerous problems, most noticeably the scope and sequence of grammar topics as well as the stereo typicality of cultural topics and related vocabulary” (Ekici, 2018). The statelessness has left the Kurdish language in the U.S. with many of the same issues they faced back at home, such as the disparities between dialects and their respective levels of standardization and modernization, the script they use, and the availability of language instructors and suitable teaching materials and technologies, among many other issues that have been obstacles confronting teaching Kurdish at home as well as in the diaspora. Technological developments have both overcome some of these obstacles as well as created new ones.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Kurdish Studies Network’s bibliography: <https://kurdishstudiesnetwork.net/bibliography/>. Accessed February 23, 2020.

How would it be for a student of English to use a French keyboard to write and communicate in English? Up to today, and in the lack of suitable technology, most students of Kurdish language rely on Arabic, Persian, or Turkish keyboards.

In addition, the unique character of the Kurdish community in the U.S. has also affected the status of teaching Kurdish. Not only is the Kurdish community in the U.S. small in demographic terms, but their existence within the U.S. is driven by factors beyond the pursuit of the American Dream. These Kurdish refugees are mainly the survivors of the violence, ethnic cleansing, chemical and genocidal campaigns by the central governments of the region. Within the U.S., their first and most important concerns all address issues of shelter, employment, and finances before reaching educational matters. Teaching/learning Kurdish will remain a secondary issue as a result (Pitkänen, Kalekin-Fishman, & Verma, 2002; Bostwick, 2014). The status of Kurdish in the diasporic U.S., has been affected by this socio-economic status of the Kurds at home. Kurdish refugees have come from a position of marginalization, lack of privilege, economic and education deprivation as they were internally colonized by the central governments of their countries of origin. Even some American Kurds decline identifying as “Kurdish.” Among many reasons, there is a perceived socio-economic status of dominant groups



(Sheyholislami & Sharifi, 2016). Unlike other privileged members of the group, this socio-economic of the Kurds prevented them, for instance, to contribute notably to the establishment of permanent programs and endowed chairs for Kurdish language and literature. In contrast, individuals such as Bita Daryabari and Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali, as well as many other respective statehood members of the group, have contributed notably in establishing endowed chairs of Persian, Turkish, and Arabic languages and literatures. Similar to the situation in their home countries, the issues of race, class, and education, among many other issues, have gravely affected the status of Kurdish in the diasporic community. Today, stateless Kurdish remains a “lesser taught language” among the LCTLs.

The intersectional situation of the stateless Kurdish language is also the result of direct and indirect governmental and educational systems of power of the central governments of the region, and their official and semi-official institutions in the U.S. By the late 1980's, the body of proto-intersectionality theorizing advanced the idea that systems of oppression work together to create a set of social conditions under which black women and other women of color live and labor, always in a kind of invisible but ever-present social jeopardy. Crenshaw synthesized this body of black feminist theorizing when she encountered the legal conundrum of black women who were discriminated against as black women. What she named

“intersectionality,” encapsulates and expands a body of work about a set of social problems that black women thinkers had been grappling with and attempting in various forms to name for nearly a century. In the twenty-five years since the publication of her two seminal essays, Crenshaw has continued to sharpen her intersectional analysis. Building on Crenshaw’s contribution to intersectionality, Cooper (2015) considers exposition and dismantling of dominant systems of power to promote the inclusion of black women as the core of intersectionality. She states that “What we must hold front and center is that in its relationship to dominant institutions (be they juridical, academic, or social), intersectionality has a teleological aim to expose and dismantle dominant systems of power, to promote the inclusion of black women and other women of color and to transform the epistemological grounds upon which these institutions conceive of and understand themselves.” The following discussion exposes how the political, social, and academic systems of power and oppression of the central governments of the region worked together and with official and semi-official institution in the U.S. and have created a set of conditions under which stateless Kurdish language has lived and labored, always in a kind of invisible but ever-present social jeopardy.

None of the official and semi-official institutions sponsored by these governments in the U.S., from embassies, consulates, cultural centers, to religious institutions, have made *any* notable steps in promoting Kurdish language, literature, or culture. However, these same institutions have been quite active in promoting their respective dominant/national language. Take the Turkish example: the Embassy of Turkey in Washington, D.C., their Consulates in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Boston *only* promote Turkish language and culture. The Turkish Cultural Centers of New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, and South Carolina are among more than hundreds of other cultural and religious organizations that only promote Turkish language, literature, and culture. These are also often community-based, non-profit, and tax-exempt educational public organizations that receive donations from the state of Turkey and private and public sectors. These institutions organize a variety of activities such as cultural nights, Turkish music classes, Turkish Ebru (water marbling) classes, Turkish cooking classes, painting classes, and Turkish (and even Ottoman) language classes (see for example Turkish Cultural Center in NYC). To the best of my knowledge, none of these cultural centers have *ever* offered a single course on Kurdish language or culture. This is in spite of the fact that the Kurdish language is the second largest

language in Turkey, spoken by approximately twenty percent of its population. By adopting the status and the language of subaltern identities and advocating for a highly selective multilingualism in the U.S., all while helping the hierarchy of power in neglecting the stateless subaltern languages and cultures back at home and in diaspora, these cultural centers contribute to the suppression of stateless and subaltern languages and the removal of their experience in the U.S. Often, if not always, the culture, music, geography, and cuisine of subaltern and stateless cultures is reproduced and introduced in these cultural centers in the name of the hierarchies. In addition to this indirect neglect and soft linguicide of Kurdish language in diaspora, the central governments of the region also do not hesitate in calling for hard linguicide of Kurdish language from thousands of miles away. Up to today, Turkey fights to rewrite history and denies there was an Armenian Genocide and Dersim Massacre a century ago. The Turkish embassies in Europe protested against the status of the Kurdish language. “Attempts to train Kurdish teachers or demand minimal mother-tongue related rights or even the registering of Kurdish names has on several occasions met resistance and threats from Turkish Embassies in Denmark and Germany,” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1984, pp.279-280; Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas & Chyet, 1996). In April 2019, the University of Tokyo in Japan announced the

inclusion of Kurdish language classes in their program. Later that same month, Vakkas Colak, the Kurdish instructor at the University of Tokyo claimed that the Turkish government tried to shut down Kurdish language classes at the university.<sup>11</sup> It goes without saying that Iran, Syria, and Iraq have similar positions regarding the Kurdish language abroad as they do at home.

Governmental and educational structures of power and suppression at the Kurds' country of origin not only interlock with each other to prevent a stateless Kurdish language from being fully visible, but also interlock with federal institutions and institutions of higher education abroad to prevent the Kurdish language from being fully visible. The federal and higher education institutions, the departments of Middle Eastern Studies in the U.S., and associations such as MESA, ACTFL, and NCOLCTL among others, have shown little interest in promoting and supporting the stateless Kurdish language. No matter how a Kurd chooses to identify herself on the U.S. census, she will be identified as Iranian, Turk, Syrian, or Iraqi on her U.S. passport, as well as in the university system. "The U.S. Census Bureau tabulates responses of "Arab," "Arabic," "Kurd," and "Berber" as Arab" (Sheyholislami &

<sup>11</sup> <https://ekurd.net/turkey-protests-kurdish-language-2019-04-30> Accessed February 23, 2020.  
<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/8e263f73-f1bf-4e0e-8659-dc2227919f04> Accessed February 23, 2020.

Sharifi, 2016).<sup>12</sup> The U.S. government prefers the central governments over the stateless nations and languages. Take for example the federal government's available scholarships for critical languages. Despite the fact that Kurdish is on the U.S. State Department's list of critical languages, none of the main federal scholarship programs such as the Critical Language Scholarship, Boren Awards, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships Program (FLAS), and National Resource Centers Programs, STARTALK, and The Language Flagship have funded Kurdish language programs. I witnessed this kind of discrimination during my time at IUB. For example, after two years of intensive work on enrollment at IUB, I finally had made ten applications for Kurdish language students for its 2017 Summer Language Workshop. I was hoping to reach IUB's minimum ten students enrolment for the fall 2017 and open a full-time position for Kurdish as per the requirement for a new language. However, the applicants had to wait until the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center (a Title VI center) had first given the FLAS away to applicants for Turkish and Persian. If any remained, they would then go to the Kurdish applicants eligible for FLAS fellowship. Six of the applicants abandoned their original plan to study Kurdish in favor of another language since they didn't want to take the

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2013/acs/acsbr10-20.html> Accessed March 2, 2020.

risk of missing out on a FLAS. As a result, only four students of the original ten were able to proceed with the program.

None of the institutions of higher education in the U.S. that have offered or currently offer Kurdish have any long-term plan or strategy for maintaining their programs. At the time of writing this article, no university in the U.S. has any permanent positions for Kurdish language or literature. Yet, they offer hundreds of programs for dominant languages of the Middle East, often under the bold area studies names. According to the institution of Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota,<sup>13</sup> in the U.S. alone, there are more than 788 permanent programs in Arabic, 109 in Turkish, 100 in Persian, and nothing on stateless languages of the Middle East. According to Middle Eastern Studies Association, there are 225 higher-education programs in the U.S. for Arabic (159), Hebrew (91), Persian (49), and Turkish (36). There are no such permanent programs for critical languages such as Kurdish. This imbalance has severely impacted Middle Eastern studies in the U.S., where the privileged group of the Middle East not only speak for the hierarchies, but also speak for subalterns (Soleimani & Mohammadpour, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://carla.umn.edu/lctl/db/index.php>.

One of the main obstacles confronting a stateless language such as Kurdish in the U.S. has been the way that departments of Middle Eastern and Near Eastern languages and cultures have treated the subaltern stateless languages and cultures such as Kurdish. Pre-occupied by scholars from the dominant languages of the region and western scholars who received their education within the framework of dominant languages of the Middle East, these departments have shown little, if any, interest in sponsoring and promoting stateless languages and cultures, such as Kurdish. The experience of Kurdish studies within the departments of anthropology, political science, and history has been very different, where Kurdish enjoys some recognition and improvement. During my four years of lecturing Kurdish at IUB and my engagement with many Kurdish scholars across the U.S., I have seen a great deal of inattention from these departments. Take for instance the way that Kurdish language classes were advertised at the IUB's Department of Central Eurasian Studies' list of offered courses.<sup>14</sup> Unlike privileged statehood LCTLs, Kurdish actually was advertised under the name "Central Eurasian Languages." Similar to IUB, the Kurdish language courses currently are planned to be offered in Nashville, TN, under "Other Languages I, II, III." Not having an independent state,

<sup>14</sup> <https://utilities.registrar.indiana.edu/course-browser/prl/soc4202/CEUS/index.shtml>  
Accessed February 23, 2020.



the Kurdish language cannot stand and be advertised independently. In some cases, there have been reports on an outright discrimination against Kurdish from these departments<sup>15</sup>.

These departments and their affiliated centers also have an imbalance in distributing internal and external resources from the federal government; most notably, those grants for area studies, critical languages, and unrepresented cultures such as Kurdish. On August 29, 2019, the U.S. Department of Education published a letter notifying the University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill that the Department's review of annual project reports submitted by the Duke-UNC consortium for Title VI Middle East Studies (CSME) evinced inherent inequities: "The Duke-UNC CSME appears to lack balance as it offers very few, if any, programs focused on the historic discrimination faced by, and current circumstances of, religious minorities in the Middle East, including Christians, Jews, Baha'is, Yazidis, Kurds, Druze, and others."<sup>16</sup> There has been a tense conversation among Middle Eastern scholars about different motivations and reasons behind this letter. However, as a scholar who has worked primarily under Title VI, I see legitimate points about the fact that there is scant

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rashid-karadaghi/for-history-how-arab-turk\\_b\\_7829918.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rashid-karadaghi/for-history-how-arab-turk_b_7829918.html)) Accessed February 23, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ed.gov/content/notice-letter-regarding-duke-unc-consortium-middle-east-studies> Accessed December 11, 2019.

attention to subaltern languages and cultures of the Middle East, such as Kurdish and the Yezidis within Middle Eastern studies programs in the U.S.

Is this unbalanced and biased attitude toward stateless languages in North America another indication that area studies programs—which are dominant within academic institutions in the U.S. for research and teaching on America’s “other” overseas—still operate within the framework of nation(singular)-state, and therefore in the thralls of a fiscal and epistemological crisis? Or this may be because, in North America, post-colonial studies stand at the forefront of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies. While post-colonial scholars of Middle Eastern studies oppose the global West’s violent denial of subaltern people’s historical agency, autonomy, and language rights on the one hand, they tacitly condone Middle Eastern states’ denial of their violently subalternised people’s historical agency, autonomy, and language rights on the other. They have erased the experiences of the subaltern and internally colonized stateless languages and cultures in favor of the Middle Eastern dominant languages and cultures in a binary matrix: Western Imperialism versus a “colonialized” Iran/Islamic world. Through this lens, one can understand Edward Said’s denial of the Iraqi Ba’athist regime’s chemical attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja and his silence on the same regime’s notorious al-Anfal Campaign against the Kurds,

where thousands were massacred. Said pointed out in the London Review of Books that the “claim that Iraq gassed its own citizens has often been repeated. At best, this is uncertain”<sup>17</sup>. Instead of recognizing this blindspot in Middle Eastern studies, post-colonial scholars such as Hamid Dabashi claim that the U.S. Department of Education’s letter is truly motivated to counter perceptions of “anti-Israeli and anti-Imperialism bias” in such university contexts.<sup>18</sup> Historically, the promotion of minority mother-tongues as a medium of instruction in the Middle East have been attributed by Middle Eastern states to Zionism, Imperialism, and the enemies of these states (Sheyholislami, 2019; Soleimani & Mohammadpour, 2019).

Even within the institutions and organizations such as ACTFL and especially NCOLCTL, which were initially founded to represent less commonly taught and critical language in the U.S., the stateless Kurdish language finds itself excluded from the opportunities reserved for privileged and statehood members of the group. Referring to the work of Smith (1998, p.xxiii), Cooper reminds us “that intersectionality

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v13/n05/edward-said/edward-said-an-american-and-an-arab-writes-on-the-eve-of-the-iraqi-soviet-peace-talks?fbclid=IwAR3aqUPZl6REXoxujiSsMnHNZFZNA7Hj5Hbj2Xr-P3awelCidqgUMJfPLLA> Accessed February 23, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: “Is 'love and desire in Iran' a threat to U.S. national security?” <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/love-desire-iran-threat-national-security-191011090501980.html> Accessed February 23, 2020.

is most useful not as an account of all the intricacies of the subjectivity of any intersectional group, but rather it is useful for exposing the operations of power dynamics in places where a single axis approach might render those operations invisible.” Since their foundation (ACTFL in 1967 and NCOLCTL in 1990), the stateless Kurdish language has not been the topic of a single presentation at their annual conferences. The Foreign Language Annals journal and NCOLCTL’s journal, for example, have not published a single article on Kurdish. However, the same institutions and their journals have been preoccupied by privileged and statehood LCTLs. The current framework of ACTFL, NCOLCTL, and similar institutions often addresses the single axis of marginalized languages: LCTLs versus CTLs. However, they are insufficient for covering the stateless language’s intersectionalities of marginalization, discrimination, and soft and hard linguicide. In “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” Crenshaw exposes the limits of this “single-axis” analysis when set against the “the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences.” “This single-axis framework,” she argues, “erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group” (1989, p.140). Similarly, these institutions with current “single-axis” framework –CTLs vs LCTLs- cannot

address “multi-axes” challenges of stateless languages in the U.S. In other words, stateless languages remain at the intersection of foreign languages, less commonly taught languages, stateless languages, and many problems have surfaced as the result of the lack of a state. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including stateless languages within an already established analytical structure for LCTLs. The intersectional experience of the stateless Kurdish language encompasses more than merely being a “less commonly taught language.” Calling attention to the manner in which the single-axis framework erases the experiences of black women, Crenshaw (1989, p.386) also exposes the larger challenge that “these problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure.” The “intersectional experience,” Crenshaw averred, “is greater than the sum of racism and sexism,” meaning that “any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p.140). These observations demand a total “recasting and rethinking” of existing policy frameworks.

Similar to the intersectional experience of black women, the intersectional experience of stateless languages demands a total “recasting and rethinking” of existing policy frameworks within federal, the institutions of higher education,

Departments of Middle Eastern Studies, ACTFL, and NCOLCTL among other institutions regarding Kurdish and other stateless languages. Within the existing policy in the national and federal level, the problem with Middle East and area studies should be acknowledged and addressed. In European academia, such fields as Kurdish studies (i.e. Exeter University) and Department of Linguistics and Philology's Iranian Languages (i.e. Uppsala University) have fared much better than North America's Middle Eastern and Near Eastern studies programs and departments. Within the institutions of higher education, the Kurdish and other stateless languages and cultures could be placed in different departments rather than in Middle Eastern studies, which historically has been suppressed and silenced. One such step would be Kurdish following the steps of Hebrew and Jewish studies programs that have separated from their historical host departments Middle Eastern and Near Eastern languages and cultures. Such a move would give the Kurdish language and culture more freedom and independence. Kurdish and other stateless languages can also make alliances with one another to increase the awareness and advocate for their cause and make national campaigns. They should engage more with national councils such as NCOLCTL to make sure such institutions remain an institution that represents *all* LCTLs, including stateless languages. For those Kurdish dialects (such as Hawramani,

Zazaki, and Lori) that are considered endangered languages, the Kurds should create and enhance digital archives and engage with programs dedicated to endangered languages.

In the lack of federal and institutional support, individual and community-based initiatives have contributed the most to the Kurdish language programs in the U.S., from the first Kurdish language course (IUB in 2006) to the most recent course (University of Central Florida 2021). For the first time, Kurdish students are attending graduate programs in the U.S. and initiate offering Kurdish language classes. Upon graduation, these programs are most likely to discontinue. In some cases (Los Angeles and San Diego, CA; Nashville, TN; and Middle East Institute, D.C.), the Kurdish community and civic leadership have initiated such activities. However, commitment to these programs is subject to individuals in impermanent positions. Several Kurdish language classes (Chicago University, NYC, and Washington D.C.) have been offered as non-credit courses, often during the evening. During my time in Tehran, Iran, Mardin, Turkey, and Damascus, Syria, I have personally attended such non-credit evening Kurdish classes that have been initiated by individuals attempting to fill the absence of any governmental and institutional sponsorships. Lacking a fixed physical location and sponsoring institution, Skype and social media outlets such as Facebook and YouTube have been playing an enormous

role in teaching stateless languages. The stateless languages have found their own state in social media. These examples tell us that the majority of Kurdish language courses in the U.S. rely on individual or community initiatives rather than hundreds of institutionally sponsored departments of Middle Eastern Studies.

The lack of funding and the minimum enrollment effectively embodies the main challenge which stateless Kurdish language programs in the U.S. severely suffer. Unlike statehood privileged languages, Kurdish in the U.S. has been only tolerated, that is, not proscribed or prohibited. This is also called “negative language rights” (Wright, 2004). Negative language rights are insufficient for a linguistic community to maintain their language in a world that is more and more globalized and defined by a knowledge-based economy (Sheyholislami, 2019, p.107). Similar to the recent limited tolerance of Kurdish in the Middle East, Middle Eastern studies in the U.S., seems to have provided some token support for Kurdish language, which showcase itself in annual lectures in Kurdish studies, sporadic summer Kurdish programs, and scattered events such as movie nights and language tables. This sophisticated limited support often led to opening a new course for Kurdish language, however, is insufficient for maintaining and continuing the program. Up to today, the “opening” of new Kurdish courses and



“discontinuing” of the old Kurdish classes, have been the most obvious character of Kurdish language programs in the U.S. Despite increasing commitments to diversity at the rhetorical level, the stateless Kurdish language has not been benefited from a single full-time position within North American academia. Cooper (2015) warns us about increasing commitments to diversity at the rhetorical level while decreasing commitments on the practical, saying, “the status of racial others within academic spaces remains fragile, especially in the era of the neoliberal university, with its increasing commitments to diversity at the rhetorical level but decreasing commitments at the level of funding for faculty in departments and programs in women’s and gender studies and ethnic studies.” Jim Cummins, one of the most prominent proponents of multilingual education, also warns of superficial progress, when he observes, “the dominant group might provide some token support for teaching [double minority] languages, knowing that just this token support would probably not be effective.” He uses the analogy of a frog in water: if you put a frog in boiling water, it will immediately jump out; however, if you put the frog in cold water and heat it slowly, the frog tolerates the gradual increase and will eventually die in the boiling water. According to Cummins, “if the linguistic assimilation is slow then people will not realize that it’s happening” (as cited in Kalan, 2016, p.71;

Sheyholislami, 2019, p.123). The status of Kurdish in both the Middle East and the U.S. is an unmistakable sign that the water is already boiling.

### **Conclusion**

The situation of Kurdish as a stateless language in the U.S. mirrors the politics of the Kurdish homeland. In both contexts, the language lacks any “positive linguistic rights,” substantial sponsorship and promotion from central governments of the region (i.e. Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq), and their official and semi-official institutions in the U.S. (such as embassies and cultural centers). This structure of power and oppression at home has spread itself abroad and has created a set of convergent conditions in which the stateless Kurdish language exists. In both contexts, the Kurdish language has been merely tolerated, not promoted in federal and institutions of higher education, departments and programs such as Middle Eastern and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Iranian, Turkish, and Arabic studies in the U.S. Under the banner of postcolonial studies, these institutions and departments have often erased the experience of the subaltern and internally colonized stateless Kurdish language in the favor of the Middle Eastern states in a binary matrix: Western Imperialism versus a “colonialized” Islamic world. Even within institutions and organizations such as ACTFL and NCOLCTL, which were initially founded to represent LCTLs in the U.S., the

stateless Kurdish language finds itself excluded from opportunities reserved for privileged members of the group, namely Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The available framework of these institutions often addresses the single axis of marginalized languages: LCTLs vs CTLs. However, such a framework is insufficient to account for the Kurdish language's intersectionality of marginalization, suppression, statelessness, discrimination, and soft and hard linguicide. This situation demands a total "recasting and rethinking" of existing policy frameworks within the federal government, institutions of higher education, Departments of Middle Eastern Studies, ACTFL, and NCOLCTL regarding the stateless Kurdish language. The direct involvement of the U.S. in the Gulf War (1990–1991), the Iraq War (2003), and the International Military Intervention against IS (2014–present), among others, has changed the status of Kurdish from being merely a stateless language to a critical stateless language. Despite this "critical" status it is the "statelessness" of the Kurdish language that prevents it from being sufficiently and fully visible and present. Lacking sponsorship, the stateless Kurdish language has often relied on individual and community-based initiatives in the U.S. to survive. Its status will remain at the intersection of a quasi-invisible, yet ever-present multiple jeopardy, so long as the language does not obtain positive language rights, sufficient resources, promotion and sponsorship from the federal

government, institutions of higher education, department of Middle Eastern studies, as well as institutions such as ACTFL and NCOLCTL. The “critical” badge often leads to opening new Kurdish courses. However, the “lack of funding and promotion” and “low enrollment” lead to closures for such stateless programs. The status of the Kurdish language in European contexts, especially in Sweden, suggests that the language can enjoy a great deal of development, even in diaspora, given support and promotion by governments and institutions of higher education.

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