

Language Maintenance or Shift? An Ethnographic Investigation of the Use of Farsi¹ among Kuwaiti Ajams: A Case Study

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged by sociolinguists that when minority groups and their respective languages come into contact with a majority group, choices of a language or a variety of language are deployed by different participants in different social contexts according to interlocutors, settings etc. Literature on dialect contact scenarios suggests that in contact situations, changes may influence the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of minority (and majority) groups. A relevant kind of linguistic change to the present study is the gradual movement away from the habitual use of an ethnic language to the use of the majority language. Sociolinguists believe that whenever two languages or two varieties of a language are complementarily distributed in a given speech community, diglossic communication will eventually take place. However, the movement away from the ethnic language is referred to by sociolinguists as language shift. One fact of the linguistic situation of the state of Kuwait is that Farsi is one of the languages that exists in the linguistic repertoire of Kuwaitis. It is worthwhile mentioning that Farsi is heavily spoken by many Kuwaitis either at home or in other domains. But I would like to assume that Farsi speakers are shifting more and more to Arabic.

This study was meant to verify and shed more light on Kuwaiti Ajams' use of Farsi and to investigate the extent to which they have shifted to Kuwaiti Arabic or maintained Farsi. Implicational scales were provided, showing patterns of language choice among two Kuwaiti Ajam Families living in two different neighbourhood. Their choices were then examined through analysing their social networks. Despite the fact that the analysis has clearly shown factors such as migration, religion and intermarriage of relative importance, the social network of members of the two Families proved to be extremely crucial in language maintenance and shift scenarios. Age and gender, on the other hand, were not as significant as social network. Moreover, the analysis clearly indicates that shift from Farsi to KA has already occurred among the grandchildren's generation of Family 2. Consequently, it could be argued that Farsi in Kuwait is likely to be extinct within the next one or two generations.

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged by sociolinguists that when minority groups and their respective languages come into contact with a majority group, choices of a language or a variety of language are deployed by different participants in different social contexts. Literature on dialect-contact scenarios suggests that in contact situations changes may influence the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of minority (and majority) groups (Chambers & Trudgill 1980; Trudgill 1986, 1999; Trudgill and Cheshire 1998; Chambers 1992; Romaine 2001). A relevant kind of linguistic change to the present study is the gradual movement away from the habitual use of an ethnic language (Farsi) to the use of the majority language (KA²) (Gal 1978; Li Wei 1994). Sociolinguists believe that whenever two languages or two varieties of a language are complementarily distributed in a given speech community, diglossic communication will eventually take place. The movement away from the ethnic language is referred to by sociolinguists as language shift.

I claim in this case-study that although Farsi is heavily spoken among Kuwaiti Ajams (Kuwaitis of Iranian origin) in Kuwait, a shift to KA is taking place. I investigate the extent to which Kuwaiti Ajams are shifting to KA or, otherwise, maintaining Farsi. The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed description of the language-choice patterns of speakers from two generations of two Kuwaiti Ajam families (parents' generation and children's generation) by primarily examining the findings in the light of the concept of social network (L. Milroy 1980, 1987; L. Milroy & J. Milroy 1992) to see the significance of networking in language maintenance and shift scenarios. However, speaker's age, sex, and area of residence (neighborhood)³ will also be examined.

As I believe that similar language-choice patterns are deployed by other Kuwaiti Ajam families, this case-study is meant to provide an incentive to other researchers to examine the language-choice patterns of other Kuwaiti Ajam families to see if we can generalize our findings to a larger Kuwaiti Ajam population.

2. Farsi-Speaking Community

Kuwaiti Ajams are the largest Kuwaiti minority group. Although they are Kuwaiti citizens they have from a non-Arab background. They have tended to reside in areas where they have formed the majority and Kuwaiti Arabs are in the minority. Hence, from the name of any residential area in Kuwait,

Kuwaitis can easily tell whether an Arab or Kuwaiti Ajam percentage is the minority. We will see later how this residential concentration affects the social network (Milroy 1980; Milroy and Muysken 1995) of Kuwaiti Ajams which consequently influences their maintenance of Farsi.

2.1 Farsi / Kuwaiti Arabic koinésation

Kuwaiti Ajams migrated to Kuwait in the early 20th century. Most came from the southern part of Iran. When they first came to Kuwait, they came with different Iranian dialects, with different lexical items and grammatical structures. Examples are the Dashti dialect, the Behbehani dialect, the Beloushi dialect, etc. At the present time, they speak a shared dialect, which is the outcome of the 'koinésation' of not only their different dialects but also the outcome of the mixture of their dialects with Kuwaiti Arabic. This shared koiné has emerged as a lingua franca among Kuwaiti Ajams. Since Standard Arabic is never used for informal oral communication in Kuwait and Kuwaiti Ajams lack the ability to speak Kuwaiti Arabic, this koiné has filled this gap, and been in use for more than a century. It is not always clear, though, retrospectively, what the linguistic features of this koiné are. This is due to the fact that no linguistic study concerned with investigating these linguistic features has been carried out.

However, the people of the older generation of each group still sometimes adhere to their original dialects. It is worthwhile mentioning that many Kuwaiti Ajams still speak Farsi fluently. Most of the younger generation, although infrequent users of Farsi, do understand it and are able to use it. Farsi is not taught in the Kuwaiti educational system except at one Iranian private school, in which 825 students are enrolled. The students are all Iranians (not Kuwaiti Ajams).

3. Literature Review

3.1 Definitions

Literature on language choice acquaints us with the fact that there are different social reasons for choosing a particular code or variety in a multilingual community (Rubin 1968, Greenfield 1972). Language maintenance and shift are considered to be the 'potential longer term effects of these choices' (Holmes 1992: 55). Similarly, Fasold deems language maintenance and shift as the 'long-term, collective results of language choice' (1984: 213). Gal claims, 'language shift is socially motivated and results in a redistribution of synchronic variants of language

to different speakers in different situation; (1979: 17). Language shift simply means that a community is in the process of giving up a language in favour of another. When a speech community, for example, begins to choose one language in domains formerly reserved for another, then it is a sign of language shift (Fishman 1985; Holmes et al. 1993; Clyne 1997). Language maintenance, on the other hand, means that a community continues using its original language alongside others.

3.2 Social Network and Language Maintenance and Shift

Gal states that one approach to analyzing the relationship between linguistic and social facts is by considering the status of those people with whom the speaker most often interacts (1979: 131). She claims 'speakers' social networks can act as powerful constraints on their linguistic presentations of self and, hence, their language choice' (ibid: 140). In an attempt to explain the variations in language-choice patterns, Gal utilised the concept of social network (1979). Her main hypothesis was that each of the two languages spoken in Oberwart, i.e. Hungarian and German, symbolised a different social value of rural and urban life. Hungarian is associated with those who lead a traditional peasant life, whereas German is associated with those who had moved away from such a tradition. The results of her analysis clearly showed a positive correlation between a preference for German and strong urban ties.

L. Milroy states that the social network concept investigates the kind and density of relationship which an individual has within the community, and that weak ties are the channels through which change may flow, while through strong ties language may be maintained (1980).

Another study that utilised the social network concept is that of Li Wei, (1994) on a Chinese community in the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Participant observation was used to collect data on language choice which were supplemented by information gathered through ethnographic interview. Attention was focused on speaker's variations in language-choice patterns with different types of interlocutors and on social network ties of members of different generations. Ten families with members from three generational cohorts were selected. In addition to direct observation, informal interviews were conducted to gather information on social network ties of the people under investigation. Results show that 'a rapid inter-generational language shift from Chinese

monolingualism in English-dominant bilingualism is currently taking place' (Li Wei: 114). Li Wei concludes that:

there is a shift from strong ethnic-oriented networks to predominantly non-Chinese, peer-group networks across the generations. Speakers with more ethnic ties adopt the Chinese only or Chinese-dominant language choice patterns and have a rather restricted command of English, whereas those with fewer ethnic ties use the bilingual and English. Peer-group ties, on the other hand, are capable of reinforcing generation-specific behavioural norms. (150).

In Malaysia, David investigated language shift among the Sindhis of Malaysia (1996). The main questions that her study sought to investigate were: Whether the Sindhi language has survived? Could it survive the Malaysian linguistic environment? Was the community experiencing language shift and if so what were the manifestations of such shift? In adopting both the use of a questionnaire and the observation of natural spontaneous discourse in various settings, she came to the conclusion that generation-related language shift was taking place in the Malaysian Sindhi community. She found that while the first generation used Sindhi predominantly in peer interaction, second generation Sindhi men and women revealed different profiles of language use both within and across generations. The second generation's interaction with each other and with the younger generation, on the other hand, were in English with the odd Sindhi codemix or codeswitch.

It is worth mentioning that some sociolinguists (e.g. L. Milroy 1980) indicate that no method of analysis at the present time is likely to capture thoroughly the complexity of the way speakers use variability. Despite the fact that this study will primarily examine the social network of two Kuwaiti Ajam families, it also deploys other variables such as age, sex and area of residence to capture a fuller picture of language maintenance and shift among the target group. As far as social network is concerned I expect, at this stage, that differences in network ties are not unlikely to exist among the two Kuwaiti Ajam families. I hope to show that both degrees of integration and individual personal ties can play important roles in accounting for variation among members of the two families.

3.3 Factors Affecting Language Maintenance and Shift

As in language choice, there are many factors which may influence language maintenance and shift such as migration, industrialization and other economic changes, contacts with country of origin, level of education, intermarriage, age, religion, ethnic identity, school language and other government pressures, and urbanization (Romaine 2000, Wardaugh

2001). To give a few examples, Clyne (1997) refers to the position of language as a core cultural value as an important component of language maintenance and shift.

Similarly, religion has also been shown by sociolinguistic studies as an important factor that influences language maintenance (Trudgill 1983; Holmes et al. 1993; Wheritte & Gonzalez 1989). In examining language maintenance and shift among Arvanites (Albanians) in Greek, Trudgill (1983: 128), for example, found that although Albanians for a long time retained a clearly separate ethnic identity, religion played a significant role in the process of partial assimilation. Both Greeks and Albanians were members of the Greek Orthodox Church, a fact that emphasized religious similarities. Various new studies have also highlighted the influence of the interlocutor or the addressee (Gal 1979, Holmes et al 1993; L. Milroy & Li Wei 1994; Young 1988; and Putz 1991). Gal (1979), for example, used an implicational scaling technique in an account of language choice and language shift in a Hungarian-German bilingual community in Oberwart, Austria. The technique was meant to conceptualize and display observed choices in a range of situational contexts as well as differences between speakers of different social characteristics. The scale clearly showed an ongoing language shift from Hungarian to German across generations. By the same token, Li Wei (1994) in his study of the Chinese community in Newcastle-upon-Tyne constructed six matrices to examine language choices by members of three generations: grandparents, parents, and children, focusing primarily on speakers' choices of language(s) according to different interlocutors. He found that the six matrices reveal that almost all speakers vary their language choices according to interlocutors types. Most speakers, for example, used both Chinese and English with a range of interlocutors. Li Wei claims that the most striking variations in language-choice patterns these matrices demonstrate are the differences that exist between speakers both across and within the three generations. For example, all female grandparents spoke only Chinese in all situations, while two out of four male grandparents spoke both Chinese and English with some interlocutors.

Pease-Alvarez has investigated native language maintenance and shift in Mexican-descent children (1993). In an effort to understand better the related phenomena of native language maintenance and shift toward English at a variety of levels and over time, she has undertaken a longitudinal study of variations in the language proficiencies, choices, and

attitudes of Mexican-origin children and their families. The findings from her survey, interview, and case studies' data provide evidence that a shift from Spanish to English has been occurring across generations at the level of language choice in the domains of home and school. A similar shift toward English also appeared to be occurring at the level of language proficiency as well. By the second generation, children seemed to be fairly proficient in English. She also found that their level of Spanish proficiency appeared to decline across generations.

Altabev investigated language shift among Judeo-Spanish speakers in the Turkish social context (1996). Based on ethnographic data she found that Indeo-Spanish is undergoing shift. Her analysis suggested that compared to the languages with which it had been in contact in Istanbul, Judeo-Spanish was perceived as an inferior language. Consequently, Judeo-Spanish's social functions had decreased and it was not transmitted through the immediate family channel. Following that, the study suggested that Judeo-Spanish while surviving in the current Turkish context, might be, at the same time, developing into a new Jewish language.

Finally, Su-Hie and Roland Sussex investigated the factors affecting the language choices of the Chinese Foochows of Sarawak, focusing in particular on how the use of the Foochow dialect vis-à-vis English and other languages might potentially result in a shift in language allegiance away from Foochow (2002). They (1) claim that in the context of Sarawak, the Foochows are a substantial, cohesive and homogeneous Chinese ethnic group with a distinctive language and ethnic identity. One would predict that they would engage in extensive language maintenance behavior. Instead, Foochows living in non-dominant areas do not seem to have sufficient attachment to the language to transmit it to the next generation. Moreover, Sue-Hie and Sussex (13) found that the mechanics of everyday interpersonal convergences in important social networks are likely to lead to longer-term shifts.

4. Methodology

Language maintenance and shift can be studied by different methods. For the sake of this case-study, both participant observation and ethnographic recorded conversations were adopted to obtain in-depth analysis of Farsi maintenance and shift among the two Kuwaiti Ajam families. The analysis is examined qualitatively. A quantitative analysis is beyond the scope of this study. The reason why participant observation is used is that it permits flexibility in accessing the target community and because the present paper aims to discover language choice patterns, the social contacts of two

Kuwaiti Ajam families, and patterns of language maintenance and shift. It is believed that participant observation allows the researcher to document and interpret social behaviors in naturally occurring contexts.

The ethnographic record conversations were chosen so that a full account of the use of Farsi could be obtained from two generations of the Farsi-speaking Ajam community and interlocutors among which Farsi is used.⁴ It was very important to get a full account from the parents' generation to gain information that is not available to the children's generation as to how far Farsi was used when the people of the parents' generation migrated to Kuwait, as well as their social networks and community structures at that time. These conversations did not take the form of a structured interview; rather open-ended questions were asked and the respondents were given as much time as possible to express their views.

4.1 Sampling of Informants

The sample of this study was two generations of two Kuwaiti families (the parents' generation and the children's generation) of Iranian origin who live in different neighborhoods in Kuwait. It is worth mentioning that the father and mother of family 1 came to Kuwait at the age of 13 and 7 respectively. On the other hand, the father and mother of family 2 came to Kuwait at age of 3 and 15 respectively. One area is where Kuwaiti Arabs are the majority and the other is one in which Kuwaiti Ajams are the majority. The choice of neighborhood is to see how social networks affect language maintenance and shift. Presumably the Kuwaiti Ajams who live in a Kuwaiti Arab area will mix mainly with Kuwaiti Arabs, whereas the Kuwaiti Ajams who live in a Kuwaiti Ajam area will mainly mix with Kuwaiti Ajams.

The sample size is modest, and I would not claim that the results reported here would necessarily hold for the wider Farsi-speaking community in Kuwait. However, the experience of the author (who comes from the same Farsi speaking community), and the overall thrust of the subjects' responses, provide a sufficiently stable and rich basis for our fundamentally qualitative analysis.

Below, a family tree for each of the two families is provided. The first family live in an area called 'Al-Shamiya', one of the old areas of Kuwait where the density of Ajams is very low. Figure 1 represents Family Tree 1 (father, mother, 3 sons, and 5 daughters). The second family live in an area called 'Al-Rumeithiya' which is considered relatively new compared to 'Al-Shamiya' and where the density of Ajams is very high. Figure 2 represents Family Tree 2 (father, mother, 7 sons and 6 daughters).

Figure 1: Family Tree 1
 (DIL = daughter-in-law, S = son, SIL = son-in-law, D = daughter, gs = grand son, gd = grand daughter)

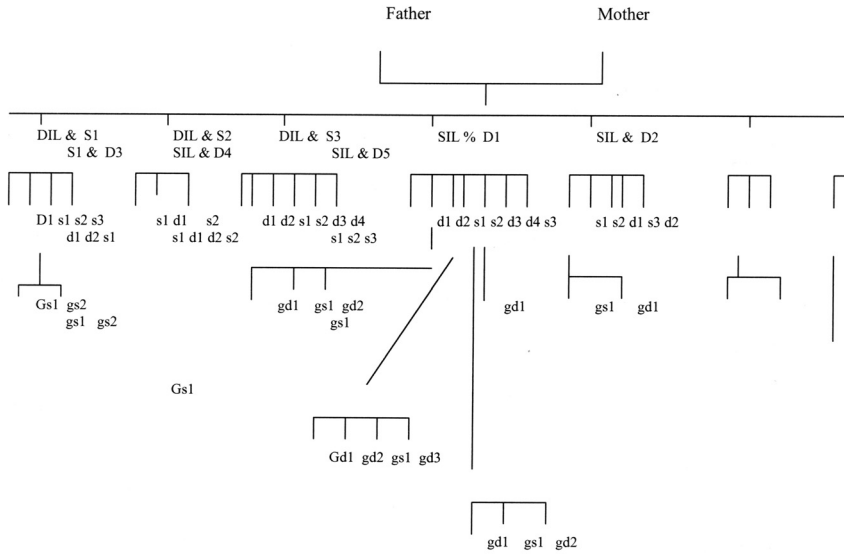
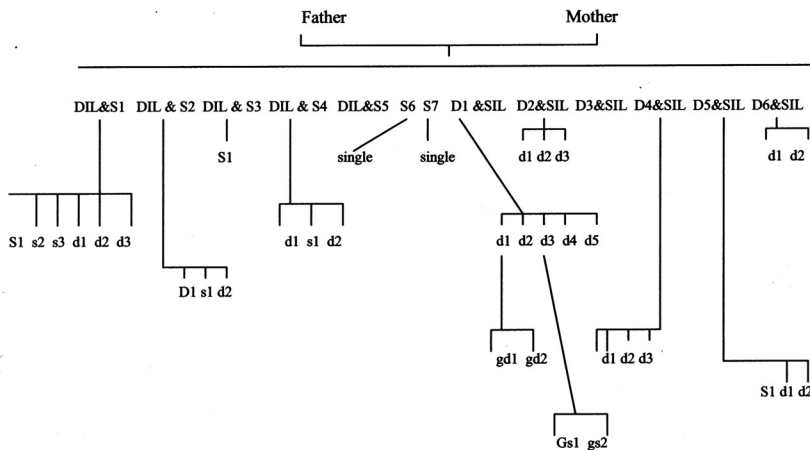


Figure 2: Family Tree 2
 (DIL = daughter-in-law, S = son, SIL = son-in-law, D = daughter, gs = grand son, gd = grand daughter)



5. Qualitative Analysis: Discussion and Interpretations

5.1 Implicational scales

Table 1 and Table 2 below show the interaction among the members of Family 1 at home and in non-home domains respectively. Table 3 and Table 4, on the other hand, show the interaction of members of Family 2 in the home domain and in non-home domains.

The main point in the above implicational scales is that they very clearly show the use of KA, Farsi and Kuwaiti Arabic/Farsi code-switching among all members of Family 1 when they interact with different interlocutors. A quick look at both implicational scales clearly shows that most members, from the two generations are in the process of shifting to KA when at home or outside the home. The significance of the use of Kuwaiti Arabic/Farsi code-switching by Son 2 will be discussed later in light of his social network.

Table 1. Implication scale for language choice in the home domain among members of Family 1

		Interlocutors							
Speaker	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Father	78	F	F	F	F	F	KA/F	A	A
Mother	72	F	F	F	F	F	KA/F	A	A
Son 1	59	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 1	55	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A	A	A
Daughter 2	49	A	A	KA/F	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 3	48	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 4	46	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 5	44	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Son 2	42	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A	A	A	-
Son 3	39	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. father | 2. mother | 3. spouse | 4. old relatives |
| 5. brothers and sisters | 6. young relatives | 7. children | 8. grand children |

A = Kuwaiti Arabic

F = Farsi

KA/F = Code switching between KA and Farsi

Table 2. Implicational scale for language choice in non-home domains by members of Family 1

Interlocutors

Speaker	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Father	78	F	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	–
Mother	72	F	F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KKA/F	A	–
Son 1	59	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 1	A	A	A	–	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 2	49	A	A	–	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 3	48	A	A	–	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 4	46	A	A	–	A	A	A	A	A
Daughter 5	44	A	A	–	A	A	A	A	A
Son 2	42	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A	A
Son 3	39	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	–

1. Iranian restaurant 2. grocery market 3. diwaniya 4. husainiya
5. Iranian or Kuwaiti Ajam salesman 6. friends while shopping 7. at a bank 8. at work

In contrast to Tables 1 and 2, these last two tables clearly show that most members of the two generations of this family still extensively use Farsi or codeswitch between KA and F in the home and non-home domains.

Generally speaking, the implicational scales above clearly show that Farsi is still widely spoken by members of the two families. However, it seems that a shift from Farsi, the ethnic language, to KA, the language of the indigenous group, is gradually taking place among them. Moreover, both the implicational scales and the reports on their language use reveal that language shift is occurring among members of Family 1 much earlier than among members of Family 2. I argue that the social network (L. Milroy 1980; Li Wei 1994) of the two families played a significant role in determining how rapidly (J. Milroy 1992) language shift occurred. Extra-linguistic factors such as age and sex proved also to have an influence on language shift.

Table 3. Implicational scale for language choice in the home domain by members of Family 2

Interlocutors

Speaker	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Father	69	F	F	F	F	F	A	A	A
Mother	60	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	KA/F
Daughter 1	47	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 1	46	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Daughter 2	42	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 2	39	A	F	A	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Daughter 3	38	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 3	36	A	F	A	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 4	35	A	F	A	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Daughter 4	34	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 5	32	A	F	-	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	-	-
Daughter 5	30	A	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 6	28	A	F	-	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	-	-
Daughter 6	27	A	F	-	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	-
Son 7	25	A	F	-	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	-	-

1. father 2. mother 3. husband 4. old relatives 5. brothers and sisters
6. young relatives 7. children 8. grand children

5.3 Social Network

The ethnographic discussions clearly demonstrate that the social networks of the two Kuwaiti Ajam families (which are strongly associated with area of residence) are highly significant in determining the shift from Farsi to KA.

5.3.1 Social Networks of Families 1 and 2

I mentioned earlier in this paper that Family 1 lives in a neighborhood where the density of Kuwaiti Ajams is high. Consequently, I argued that the social network of members of the two families will significantly differ from each other, a difference that will act as a sharp indication of whether a shift from Farsi to KA is or is not taking place. If we look closely at the choices of

Table 4. Implicational scale for language choice in non-home domains by members of Family 2

Interlocutors

Speaker	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Father	69	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	–
Mother	60	F	F	–	F	F	F	–	–
Daughter 1	47	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 1	46	F	F	KA/F	KA/F	A	KA/F	A	A
Daughter 2	42	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 2	39	F	F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Daughter 3	38	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 3	36	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	KA/F	A	A	A
Son 4	35	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	KA/F	A	A	A
Daughter 4	34	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 5	32	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 6	30	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Daughter 5	28	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Daughter 6	27	KA/F	KA/F	–	KA/F	KA/F	KA/F	A	A
Son 7	25	KA/F	KA/F	A	A	KA/F	A	A	A

1. Iranian Restaurant 2. Grocery Market 3. Diwaniya 4. Husainiya
5. Iranian or Kuwaiti Ajam salesman 6. Friends while shopping 7. At a bank 8. At work

Farsi and KA in the first two implicational scales (Tables 1 and 2) we notice that there is a clear shift from Farsi to KA by all members of the family. If we examine these choices across their social networks, which were revealed during the ethnographic discussions, we notice that both parents and their children have lost almost all contact with Kuwaiti Ajams. We also recognise that members of Family 1 have more non-Ajam links than members of Family 2. Moreover, members of the children's generation have made more contacts with Kuwaiti Arabs than their parents due to the fact that they (the children) work and engage in more outside social activities than their parents do. Also, both the parents' and the children's Ajam links have

become fairly weak and we know from the literature (L. Milroy 1980, J. Milroy 1992) that it is strong networks that help to maintain non-prestigious languages or dialects. Another indication of the weak ties members of Family 1 maintain with Ajams is the fact that Farsi is mostly used in the home domain as the first implicational scale shows. They claim that the opportunities for them to interact with other Kuwaiti Ajams beyond the immediate family are rare. However, it is interesting to see that it is only Son 2 who claims to use more Farsi than his brothers and sisters. Son 2 revealed the fact that he has developed stronger ties with Kuwaiti Ajams since marriage.⁶

The ethnographic discussions also reveal that the network structure of Family 1 (except for Son 2) with Kuwaiti Ajams can be characterised as uniplex (L. Milroy 1980) rather than multiplex and that their network structure with Kuwaiti Arabs is the other way round. Son 3 and Daughters 4 and 5, for example, claim that they are connected with Kuwaiti Arabs in more than one capacity, for example, as friends, workmates and neighbors. They also claim that although they have some Kuwaiti Ajam workmates, they do not usually meet with them in any other capacity. Even Son 1 and Daughters 2 and 3, who have retired, claim that their close friends are those Kuwaiti Arabs who were once their workmates.

In general, we may argue that with Family 1, there is a shift (particularly in non-home domains) from strong ethnic-oriented (Li Wei 1994) networks to predominantly non-Ajam networks starting from the parents' generation. Elderly people only speak Farsi to elderly addressees, mostly in the home domain, a fact that implicitly shows the significance of the interlocutor in language maintenance and shift scenarios. Moreover, most members of the children's generations seem to have developed only weak ties (interactive networks) with Kuwaiti Ajams through which the shift to KA is taking place.

In contrast to Family 1, the social networks of members of Family 2 are quite different. The implicational scales (Table 3 and 4) clearly show that members of the parents' and the children's generation of Family 2 use much more Farsi than members of Family 1. Examining their choices across the findings of the ethnographic discussions we notice that they have fewer non-Ajam links than those of Family 1 and have strong ties (exchange networks with Kuwaiti Ajams) through which Farsi was maintained. Due to the fact that Family 2 resides in Al-Rumeithiya, a neighborhood where the density of Kuwaiti Ajmas is high, most members of the family developed close-knit social networks with Kuwaiti Ajams and

relatively loose-knit social links with Kuwaiti Arabs. It is worth mentioning that network patterns of a strong kin basis similar to those found in Hammer, one of three Belfast communities studied by L. Milroy (1980), are not difficult to find in Al-Rumeithiya. It is not unlikely, for example, to find five or more family relatives living in very close proximity. The discussions reveal that both the parents' and the children's ties are mostly with Kuwaiti Ajams due to the fact that the social activities that they usually participate in take place in domains that are frequented by Kuwaiti Ajams. For example, the father and the eldest three sons usually go to an Ajam diwaniya⁷ or to a husainiya⁸; almost all the females regularly visit husainiyas or religious gatherings where all attendants are Kuwaiti Ajams. However, if we go down the implicational scale (Table 4) we notice that Sons 3, 4 and 7 are shifting from Farsi to KA in domains such as the husainiya, or with Kuwaiti Ajam or Iranian salesmen. Moreover, Son 7 doesn't even use Farsi in the diwaniya. This clearly demonstrates that there are differences between speakers both across and within the two generations. But this fact cannot be interpreted in terms of age difference since Sons 5 and 6, who are younger than Son 3 and 4, still use Farsi in the same domains and interlocutors. The ethnographic discussions point out that the social networks of Sons 3, 4 and 7 are different than those of Sons 5 and 6. The former have maintained more links with Kuwaiti Arabs than their other brothers.

As to the notion of multiplexity (L. Milroy 1980), it seems that the network structure of members of Family 2 with Kuwaiti Ajams are dense and multiplex and with Kuwaiti Arabs less dense and uniplex. Most male and female members of this family (except Sons 3, 4 and 7) claim that they are connected to their Kuwaiti Ajam friends in more than one capacity. Most of their friends, they claim, are also their work-mates, their neighbors, their diwaniya friends (for males), etc. The relationships of members of Family 2, then, can be regarded as forming a relatively insulated network (Bortoni-Ricardo 1985) which is characterised by a high density of social contacts with Kuwaiti Ajams; whereas the relationships of members of Family 1 can be regarded as a more integrated network (Bortoni-Ricardo) which refers to those having less multiplex links, in this case with their ethnic brethren, but possibly a greater more central integration into Kuwaiti society in general. In other words, it is not unlikely that in an insulated network (Family 2) Farsi may be maintained.

One of the most striking findings revealed by Table 3 is that all members from the children's generation of Family 2 claim not to use Farsi

with their children who form the grandchildren's generation. This might be a crystal-clear indication that although members of the children's generation of Family 2 maintain Farsi, shift to KA will take place within the grandchildren's generation even within this relatively tight-knit Ajam family which otherwise uses Farsi extensively.

To sum up, first, we can say that speakers' social networks can act as powerful constraints on their language use (Gal 1979). The findings of the social network analysis in this case-study are parallel to similar findings in other language shift studies in terms of weak and strong ties on the one hand, and dense, multiplex versus less dense and uniplex, on the other. This case-study clearly confirms the fact that the more weak ties members of a given ethnic group (e.g. Kuwaiti Ajams) have with members of their own ethnic group, the more they shift to the variety of the majority group (e.g. KA). I tend to agree with L. Milroy (1980: 136, 137) that 'a relatively dense multiplex network structure has the capacity to impose specific linguistic norms upon its members' and that 'density and multiplexity usually go together, and that 'dense, multiplex networks act as norm enforcement mechanisms'. Second, this study also affirms that particular languages are associated with particular groups of speakers who are members of the same social networks, and social networks may vary on an individual basis, regardless of age and generation (e.g. Son 2 in Family 1). Bell (1984), arguing along the line of the present discussion, says that variations between speakers also affect the speech of a single speaker in different situations. In other words, individual speakers adapt their language behaviour to resemble linguistically members of the same social group and to accommodate to their audience.

Our findings are also compatible with those of Li Wei (1994) (in his study of the Chinese community in Britain), in that speakers with more ethnic ties (Family 2) adopt the ethnic (Farsi) variety, whereas those with fewer ethnic ties (Family 1) use the non-ethnic (KA) variety. It is also revealed by this case-study that the relationship between social networks and language use forms the basis for the complex symbolism that Farsi and KA represent in the community. In other words, both languages are in use in the community as a whole but each with particular groups of speakers and interlocutors.

At this point I predict that a shift from Farsi to KA will occur among members of the children's generation of both family 1 and 2. One may need to investigate in the course of time the linguistic behaviour of the grandchildren's generation to see whether this prediction can be verified.

5.3.2 Age

The implicational scales clearly demonstrate that variations in language-choice patterns are found to be associated primarily with age, with older speakers using Farsi, and the younger adopting bilingual patterns. Such findings confirm those of many sociolinguistic studies (for example, Gal 1979; Dorian 1987, 1998; Sridhar 1988; Wherritt & Gonzalez 1989; Li Wei 1994) demonstrating the importance of age in situations of language maintenance and shift. In this case-study age associates with area of residence, a finding which harmonises with Li Wei's (1994) suggestion that age alone tells us little about the social mechanisms underlying the language shift process. To clarify this point we noticed that although, for example, the mother of Family 2 (who came to Kuwait at the age of 15) remained monolingual, the father of Family 1 (who came to Kuwait around the age of 13 and who is much older than the mother of Family 2) became bilingual. What accounts for such a fact is their social networks.

The analysis of this case-study also indicates that change in the use of a linguistic variety was observed across the two generations (Gal 1979) as far as Family 1, for example, is concerned. As an instance, we notice that only Daughter 1, among members of the children's generation of Family 1, is a stable bilingual, albeit using Farsi much less than before. On the other hand, the speech of Son 1, who is the eldest in the family, has undergone linguistic change.

Generational differences were also examined through parent/children interaction. For example, the father and mother of Family 1 kept using Farsi with their parents, while their children (Son 1 through Daughter 5) were found to use KA with their parents most of the time. I fully agree with Eckert (1989, 1997, 2000) that, when the full age-stretch is carefully examined, rather than dividing that age continuum into equal chunks, the age continuum should be generally interpreted as portraying continuous apparent time. At some point, the individual's progress through normative life stages should be considered rather than, or in addition to, chronological age. I also agree with Holmes (1992) that comparing the speech of people from different age groups can be a useful clue to language change, and that differences between the speech of older people and younger people can be interpreted as indications of change in progress. Having examined in this study the social networks of the speakers alongside their chronological age I arrived at the conclusion that change is in progress within the two families.

Another important variable was found to be the age of the addressee (Aipolo and Holmes 1990, Li Wei 1994). Aipolo and Holmes, for example, in their study of the use of Tongan in New Zealand found that within different settings there is evidence that the addressee has a substantial influence, not only on the choice of language but, more interestingly, on the amount of English introduced or the amount of code-switching or mixing reported. They report that all their informants reported using only Tongan to their grandparents. However, between spouses, Tongan was the norm in all settings, except in cases where respondents were married to non-Tongans. In social gatherings, Tongan also predominated. In the present study, it seems that within the family the use of Farsi or KA is strongly influenced by the age of the addressee. With Family 1, for example, it is noticeable that the parents use only Farsi with old relatives. The eldest sister also claimed to codeswitch KA/F with old relatives too. With Family 2 the importance of the age of the addressee is clearer. We find that even the younger informants claim to codeswitch KA/F with old and young relatives although they sometimes codeswitch between KA and Farsi with young relatives. Moreover, parents use Farsi with people of their own generation but KA with their children. The result, as has been shown, is passive bilinguals, i.e., children growing up able to understand Farsi, but apparently not to speak it.

The implicational scale for Family 1 shows that both Daughter 2 and Son 2, for example, codeswitch between KA and F at home with their spouses while the other children use KA. In domains other than the home, it is only Son 2 who codeswitches between KA and F in different places with different interlocutors such as in Iranian restaurants, diwaniya, husainiya and the grocery market. If we examine the implicational scales for Family 2, we find that almost all members of the children's generation codeswitch KA/F with different interlocutors at home and in other domains as well. But, nevertheless, there are differences among the informants. For example, Sons 2, 3, and 4 use only KA with their wives while the others codeswitch between Farsi and KA. There is unanimity, however, that they all use KA with their children. As with other interlocutors in other domains we see that Sons 3, 4, and 7, for example use only KA in the husainiya, and with their friends while shopping while the others claim to codeswitch Farsi with KA. Similarly, Li Wei (1994) in his study of the Chinese community in Britain also found that almost all his speakers vary their language choices according to interlocutor types. Most speakers that he examined use both Chinese and English with a range of interlocutors, except when the interlocutors are female grandparents to whom all speakers use Chinese only.

5.3.3 Gender

The analysis reveals that gender patterns among Family 1 are different from those of Family 2. Both men and women of Family 1 seem to be more aware of the symbolic values of KA as the available linguistic alternative (Gal 1979). As the ethnographic discussion shows, most members of Family 1 show a gradual shift to KA; whereas both men and women of Family 2 still maintain Farsi. However, our study does not seem to confirm Gal's (1979) suggestion that young women are farther along in the direction of change than older people and young men. We notice that Son 1 in Family 1 who is older than Daughter 1 does not retain the same level of bilingualism as she does. Furthermore, both young men and young women in the family are in the process of shifting to KA. As for Family 2, there seems to be no difference between men and women. All members of the family are bilingual in both Farsi and KA.

One of the limitations of this study is that we were not able to find whether the grandparents' generation women tend to maintain the ethnic language more than men do as Holmes (1993) suggests. This restriction arose from the fact that, first of all, the only member of the grandparents' generation in Family 1 was the grandmother (on the mother's side) with whom the members of the parents' and the children's generation had interacted for a period of time. There was no data available on the grandfather (on the mother's side) so a comparison between men and women of the grandparents' generation could not be drawn. Data on the grandparents (on the father's side) are also missing⁹. Second, if we examine the parents' generation, we can see that both the mother and the father equally maintained the ethnic language. Among the children's generation, we can see that only Daughter 1 maintained the ethnic language while the others did not. Moreover, Son 2 has also maintained the ethnic language better than his older sisters have.

As for Family 2, the same situation exists in the parents' and the children's generation. Members of the grandparents' generation are all dead and in the parents' generation both the mother and the father equally maintain the ethnic language. In contrast to the children's generation of Family 1, the linguistic behaviour of the children's generation of Family 2 shows some differences. All the children, both males and females, seem to maintain the ethnic language.

5.3.4 Other Social Variables

In addition to the primary significance of social network, age, and (to a much lesser extent) gender, the discussion also reveals that some of the

reasons for language shift among Kuwaiti Ajams in Kuwait are migration (Kerswill 1985), contact with country of origin (Aipolo & Holmes 1991, Jaspaert & Kroon 1991, Bennet 1992) intermarriage (Gal 1978, Young 1988; Kanazawa & Loveday 1988), religion, and the position of language as a core cultural value (Clyne 1997).

5.3.4.1 Migration

As stated by most sociolinguists, migration plays an important role in language shift. We have noticed that the parents' generation in this study found it necessary to adopt the language of the indigenous population in order to easily communicate and earn their living while keeping their mother tongue largely for the home domain. Secondly, the two families eventually began to use the language of the society they migrated into for interaction with members of their own group.

5.3.4.2 Intermarriage

Intermarriage (Gal 1978, Kanazawa and Loveday 1988, Young 1988) is shown to play an important role in language maintenance and shift. In Gal's (1978: 12) study, for example, the life possibilities for women depend mainly on whom they marry. The peasant wife typically spends the day doing farm work, whereas marriage to a worker involves only household tasks and upkeep of a kitchen garden. Wives of workers sometimes get part-time jobs. So in her study the women, particularly the young ones, prefer to marry workers rather than peasants. Getting married to workers and getting involved in part-time jobs increased the wives' networks; consequently, language shift took place among wives of workers before taking place among wives of peasants. Kanazawa and Loveday (1988:433) found that the increasing number of intermarriages between Japanese and Portuguese also affected the language vitality in the community, with one marriage partner typically opting for Portuguese in the home for the sake of convenience and all-round mutual intelligibility. Similarly, in this study, Daughters 4 and 5 in Family 1, for example, who were married to Kuwaiti Arab men and Son 3 who was married to a Kuwaiti Arab woman claimed to have shifted completely to KA. On the other hand, the other sisters and brothers (especially Son 2 who claimed to use Farsi extensively after marriage) who married within their own ethnic group claimed to use some Farsi.

Intermarriage also has influence on contact with country of origin (Jaspaert & Kroon 1991, Bennett 1992). Again, Daughters 4 and 5 of Family 1 who were married to Kuwaiti Arabs lost contact with Iran, their parents'

country of origin, and consequently shifted completely to KA. Members of Family 2, on the other hand, in which the mother came to Kuwait after marriage, kept close contact with their parents' country of origin and consequently maintained Farsi through two generations. It is worth mentioning in passing that in the area where Family 2 lives there are a considerable number of intermarriages between Kuwaiti Ajam men and Iranian women where Farsi has been maintained through their relatives such as uncles, aunts, and cousins. They mentioned that when they visit relatives in Iran, they get a good opportunity to practice Farsi. By contrast, members of Family 1, where no intermarriage occurred, lost contact with their country of origin from the children's generation. The parents and the eldest daughter kept their contact simply to visit holy shrines in Iran. Members of Family 2 reported that sometimes they visit Iran three times a year since it is only half an hour's flight and the flight is not costly, whereas most informants of Family 1 reported that the last time they visited Iran was in 1970. These findings are parallel to those of Bennett (1992) in her study on the Dutch in Australia who found that those informants who regularly visit the Netherlands maintained the Dutch language better than those who didn't.

5.3.4.3 Religion

As far as religion is concerned, the discussion shows that the members of Family 2 kept going to husainiyas to listen and practise Shi'i rituals which strengthened their religious identity. In spite of the fact that the rituals are mostly carried out in KA the interaction between people there is widely carried out in Farsi. Farsi, then, to these people is considered as a symbol of their religious identity. This is derived from the fact that since Iran, where Kuwaiti Ajams originally come from, is a Shi'i Muslim country, and the national language there is Farsi, Shiism and Farsi to some Kuwait Ajams are strongly intertwined. If we take Clyne's (1997) view, we can say that religion to members of Family 2 has positioned Farsi as a core cultural value.

With Family 1 the situation is quite the opposite. Living in a Kuwaiti Arab area and rarely going to husainiyas, has made them lose loyalty to Shiism, either by undermining the differences between the two Islamic sects or by adopting the rituals of the Sunni sector which has hence led to a linguistic change among them. They no longer feel the strong link between religion, and Farsi is no longer a symbol of religious identity.

6. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to present an ethnographic investigation of language maintenance and shift among two generations of two Kuwaiti Ajam families (living in two different neighborhoods) in Kuwait, mainly through analysing their social networks.

Our aim in this paper was to give in-depth analyses to see how far Farsi is maintained or shifted from among the two Kuwaiti Ajam families. Despite that fact that the analyses have clearly shown factors such as migration, religion and intermarriage of relative importance, the social network of members of the two families proved to be crucial in language maintenance and shift scenarios. Our findings confirm those of L. Milroy (1980) regarding strong and weak ties. While most members of Family 1, who have weak contacts with Kuwaiti Ajams, shifted to KA, members of Family 2 maintained Farsi through strong contacts with Kuwait Aajms. In this paper, age and gender were not as significant as social network. Moreover, the analysis clearly indicates that a shift from Farsi to KA has already occurred among the children's generation of Family 1. Consequently, it could be predicted that Farsi in Kuwait will be extinct within the next one or two generations.

Insights for further research

Upon the above conclusion, I suggest that further research is needed in the following:

1. A qualitative investigation of the grandchildren's generation to verify my findings and to examine their linguistic behavior regarding language-choice patterns.
2. A qualitative investigation of the linguistic behavior of other Kuwaiti Ajam families living in other areas to see if my findings can be generalized.
3. A quantitative analyses for items (1) and (2) above.
4. In order to understand the active process of koinésation within the creation of this spoken koiné in Kuwait, research should taken the following two directions:
 - a. Search for evidence of spoken Farsi (and its varieties) in the early years of its emergence.
 - b. Search for evidence of prior koinésation in data from contemporary Farsi used in Kuwait.
5. Although my aim was not to examine the structural and the social constraints on code-switching among Kuwait Ajams, the topic still remains interesting for other researchers to investigate.

FOOTNOTES

1. Farsi in this study does not refer to Farsi spoken in Iran; rather it refers to a koiné spoken by Kuwaitis who migrated from Iran to Kuwait. I will refer to this group as Kuwaiti Ajams.
2. Throughout the study 'KA' refers to Kuwaiti Arabic
3. Throughout the study 'area of residence' and 'neighbourhood' will be used interchangeably.
4. The lengthy account of the ethnographic conversations were not attached to this paper due to space limit.
5. An interesting behaviour illustrating the importance of social network was revealed by the eldest son of Family 2. He recalls that, until recently, when the old areas were not populated by non-Kuwaitis, he and his father used to go to a diwaniya (see note 7) in their old residential area, where they met old Kuwaiti Ajams and extensively used Farsi. If we compare this situation with the father and the eldest son of Family 1, who cut themselves off from their old area, we can realise how Farsi was maintained by members of Family 2. We are informed by the father and the eldest son of Family 1 that they lost almost all links with their friends because the new area they moved to during the late 1950s and 1960s was, relatively speaking, far from the areas where their friends moved to.
6. The ethnographic discussions revealed that Son 1 of Family 1 was married to a woman from Al-Rumeithiya area.
7. A diwaniya is a social leisure gathering where groups of intimate male friends and relatives usually meet to spend time chatting and playing cards. It has developed to act not only as place of recreation but as a place where Kuwaitis could discuss current political, social and economic issues.
8. Husainiya, named after the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Al-Husain, who was killed in a battle, is a religious gathering for Shiite Muslims where they meet and usually listen to a preacher appraising Al-Hussain and his family. There are a large number of husainiyas held all round the year, especially in the month of 'Muharam' when Al-Hussain was killed. Holding these husainiyas is permitted by the Sunni government of Kuwait as a sign of respect to the Shiite community.
9. The only data available show that his children (father and mother in Family 1) claim that their parents used Farsi with all their children all the time.

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