

Article history: Received 20 September 2017

OBITUARY

In Memoriam: Amir Hassanpour (1943 -2017) | Amir Sharifi[‡]

Abstract

This tribute memorialises Professor Amir Hassanpour (1943-2017) a pioneer of Kurdish sociolinguistics, an influential advocate of Kurdish studies, a public intellectual, and a visionary humanist. As a scholar, his contributions are wide and varied and have had a significant impact, broadening our knowledge of the Kurdish history, nationalism, language, media, gender, social structures and movements. He will be remembered for raising and transforming the consciousness of the academic community regarding the rightful place of the Kurdish language and studies. As a revolutionary, Hassanpour played a key role in studying, organising, and leading social movements. He was truly an inspiration to many young researchers and political activists, a heroic man with a lifelong commitment to justice and a new vision of communism.

Keywords: Kurdish studies; Amir Hassanpour.

Amir Hassanpour, a founding figure in Kurdish sociolinguistics who can claim to have pioneered and revolutionised Kurdish studies in general, sociolinguistics in particular, passed away on 24 June, 2017 in Toronto, Canada. Although a long illness had made him frail for some time, he remained a robust intellectual and a brave visionary to the end in his ceaseless labour of love and life-long commitment to Kurdish scholarly endeavours and universal liberty and communism, a double movement that guided and defined his productive life. Long before his death he had come to be known as one of the most prolific and most influential sociolinguists of his generation, with contributions vast and varied enough to go beyond the confines of sociolinguistics. The persistent nature and scope of Hassanpour's intellectual contributions and political concerns reflect some of the most salient aspects of his generation's research agenda and intellectual preoccupations. For those in Kurdish studies, this is indeed a tragic loss. He served on the editorial advisory board of *Kurdish Studies* from the outset and as a contributor had cultivated the theoretical and practical role and power of our community in producing and disseminating knowledge about crucial issues of our times.

Over the course of his life, Hassanpour took every opportunity to embark on the monumental study of Kurdish contemporary history, language, and nationalism by providing seminal accounts of the rise of Kurdish nationalism (1989a) and the dialogic discourses it has wrestled with in the context of modernity. His enlightening analysis of historical knowledge and insight about

[‡] Amir Sharifi, Department of Linguistics, California State University, Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, Long Beach, California 90840, USA. E-mail: Amir.Sharifi@csulb.edu.



the Kurdish language and societies can be held up as a mirror of our past and present. As such, we can say that the Hassanpourian legacy has (re)shaped our understanding of Kurdish linguistic, national, cultural, and political trajectories. In his research, as in life, he looked back at history for insight; his vision, however, looked forward with almost prophetic foresight about the prospect of Kurdish nationalist and social movements and the need to advocate for the diversity of ideas, dialects, scripts, and democratic principles. For him, the Kurdish experience helped him to look for new pathways both within and outside of Kurdish traditional discourses across different disciplines. In addition to his contributions to developments in different fields of academic inquiry, his political approach, inspired by the Maoist conception of Marxism, was universalistic, as he was throughout his life. Hassanpour was intensely concerned with issues of social justice and inequality in which notions of history, nation, class, language, and gender are implicated. He believed that in the face of political and moral catastrophes that are threatening the world, the future irrevocably belongs to a new form of communism, the guiding principles of which he outlined in a new book entitled *bar fraz-e-monj-e nuvin-e communism* (*On the New Wave of Communism* (2017)).

To most of us in Kurdish Studies and Linguistics, which he helped found and expand as a blossoming academic field, Hassanpour was a leading figure, particularly at a time when the field was not hospitable to Kurdish linguistics for political reasons and when Kurdology did not go beyond lifeless grammar descriptions, typologies, and folklore of a mythical, mysterious, and “war-like” people. Hassanpour’s persistent advocacy for Kurdish sociolinguistics inspired many of us through his remarkable contributions by opening up new avenues of research. Because of the clarity, frequency, and intensity with which he was able to explain his notions on language and Kurdish society, his ideas have found striking resonance both in scholarly circles and in the public domain, and have led to controversy among Kurdish intellectuals, many of whom have yet to appreciate the depth of his knowledge and contributions. His scholarly work deserves a greater homage, as he was the author of hundreds of publications and an indefatigable contributor to a great many conversations about political movements. A fair appraisal of his inspirational work both in the areas of sociolinguistics and history merits a more comprehensive approach. Here I will provide a succinct overview of his major contributions and the diversity of scholarly traditions both academic and political. My intention is not to introduce his extensive body of work chronologically but to identify and describe the most salient and distinguishing features of his scholarship and political activism.

I came to know Amir Hassanpour through his doctoral dissertation (1989), “*The Language Factor in National Development: The Standardization of the Kurdish Language*,” a copy of which our mutual now deceased friend, Hassan Ahmadi, a librarian and Kurdologist in his own turn, had received from “Amir”. He appreciated the work as a “rare and remarkable” achievement, and delighted in

the vastness and richness of his sources that “Amir had toiled over by exhausting all possible sources.” (Personal communication, H, Ahmadi, 4 April, 1989). Although I read the work avidly, it was only years later as a graduate student of Applied Linguistics that I came to appreciate Hassanpour’s intricate theoretical insights, intertwined with history, language, and politics, which were rendered through a lucid style of writing.

Amir was born in 1943 and raised in the city of Mahabad, which he called “the centre of Kurdish nationalism”. He went to Tehran when he was seventeen and graduated from high school in 1961. At Tehran University he studied economics initially and subsequently received his B.A in English in 1964. After graduating, he taught English in a secondary school in Mahabad from 1965 to 1966. His keen interest in learning about language brought him back to the graduate program in Linguistics at Tehran University where he continued working on his doctoral program while teaching. His earlier insights into the dynamic interaction of critical theory, education, and political activism were informed and inspired by the famous Iranian scholar, Amir Husayn Aryanpour, and his Marxian sociological theory and dialectical methodology, which helped to bind the young Hassanpour’s vision of language tightly to class, gender, and national oppression. It is for this reason that he wrote a reflexive and critical article “*Amir Husayn Aryanpour and the Teaching of Marxist Sociology in the 1960’s*” (2016) about the role of Marxian educational pedagogy and the nature of higher education in Iran, which, according to Hassanpour, only validated and extended historically privileged nationalist or Islamic epistemologies and pedagogies, discounting, denying, and repressing what Marxian educational practices that intellectuals such as Amir Husayn Aryanpour had represented. According to his partner and co-author, Professor Shahrzad Mojab, whom he met during the time, he was one of the leading figures in the Iranian Students’ Confederation in the U.S., a comprehensive book under the same title will be published shortly. Hassanpour had also become involved in Iranian Students’ and Kurdish-focused movements as a student in Tehran. Despite some periods of relative liberal climate, the dominant paradigm was problematic for him, as he had to constantly wrestle with restrictions against his intellectual inquisitiveness and revolutionary spirit. He often narrated anecdotes of linguistic repression from that era. One incident involved a Tehran University professor who had chastised him in front of his fellow students by mockingly saying, “The tip of Hassanpour’s pen is sharper than his tongue,” (1996b) for quoting Minorsky’s classification of the Kurdish language. Hassanpour’s vibrant and vigorous preoccupations with larger issues of sociocultural issues to study Kurdish linguistics and publish his contributions, which in Iran was inconceivable under draconian restrictions that would consider any references to Kurdish as “secessionism”, took him to the University of Illinois in the U.S., where he received his Ph.D. in Communication Studies, Sociolinguistics and contemporary Middle Eastern history in 1989. He subsequently immigrated to Canada, where he taught at the

University of Windsor and the University of Concordia before joining the University of Toronto as a full professor at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, where he taught a variety of courses in communication, sociolinguistics, and Middle Eastern history before he retired. Throughout his long and productive research in the US and Canada, he deepened and expanded our understanding of linguistics, communication studies, sociolinguistic structures in the context of contemporary Kurdish and Middle Eastern history. Ever since I first read his dissertation, I was inspired by his exemplary research, which I drew on for my political activism and academic pursuit as an applied linguist.

His contributions as an iconic figure have evoked similar sentiments in his colleagues, reflecting his profound legacy as described in a series of interviews by Professor Hassanpour's lifelong friend Hasan Ghazi (2017) at Exeter University, the site of the Centre for Kurdish Studies where Professor Hassanpour had been a keynote conference speaker in 2009. Clemence Scalbert Yücel, a researcher and lecturer on ethno-politics, spoke of the formative and central influence Professor Hassanpour had on her doctoral work and research. Michiel Leezenberg, in expressing his sorrow remarked, "He was a great man, an academician, a Kurdologist, a researcher on the sociolinguistics of Kurdistan. He was a great friend, a great man whose contributions were invaluable..." Michel Chyet, an old friend of his, recalled, "I had known him for 25 years, he was a dear friend, the leading figure in research about Kurds." Seevan Saeed, a young researcher, in an impassioned tone said, "He remained an intellectual and a critic; he never shook before any force Kurdish or non-Kurdish.... He remained a revolutionary until the last minute of his life... Very few people can be found like him. The professor was a vanguard. I hope I can be someone like him." Jaffer Sheyholislami, his colleague and co-author for whose dissertation Hassanpour had served an external reviewer, admired him for his originality, ingenuity, and generosity. He said, "I feel indebted to Dr. Hassanpour; I learned a great deal from him aside from the fact that I have benefited from his works tremendously, but also as a friend who always eagerly answered my questions, not just me, he was like this for everyone." His lifelong friend and political activist, Fateh Shaykh, in a recent interview stressed Hassanpour's democratic spirit: "... despite our ideological differences he maintained his friendship with me."

Although academicians and political activists may have different perceptions of Hassanpour's life, both sides would converge on Hassanpour's academic commitment and the integrity of his character, a distinctive quality rooted in his passion for generously sharing his knowledge; as a corollary, he had a remarkable zest for teaching, "...teaching for me is an integral part of intellectual and political struggle...even my academic work is a political struggle" (Gullistan, 2014). He was an inspiration to his students and their acknowledgement and intellectual appreciation for his mentorship and guidance was evident in their inquiries and expressions of gratitude. To Valerie

Lynn Scatamburio, a graduate student, Professor Hassanpour's class was "indispensable in my decision to further my academic pursuit" and in writing her thesis, *Critical pedagogy, political correctness and the media* (1994). Anne Clémence (2012) in her doctoral dissertation praises Professor Hassanpour for "unconditionally supporting me over the years, for always providing me with meaningful feedback, and for sharing with me [his] passion for the Middle East" (p. iv).

In responding to a query that Dr. Sheyholislami and I (Personal communication, 2014) had launched about the state of the Kurdish language in North America, Professor Hassanpour's succinct but careful and humorous comment was instructive if not predictive of what we had yet to find in our study. He wrote, "...in spite of the revolutionary and unceasingly revolutionizing communication technologies, which have reinvented time and, through it, "annihilated space" (to borrow from Marx), the basic trend in the vitality of the language of immigrant groups including the Kurds has not visibly changed the experience of the past centuries and decades (of Kurds and non-Kurds): the children who are born here (in diaspora) or grow up here have little interest in the language of their parents, and the children of these children have no interest in it and they do not learn beyond a few words (and exceptions do not change the rule). About the number of Kurdish speakers, the US census figures are the most accurate. Years ago, when I tried to use the census figures, I found out the figures for languages with over 100,000 speakers are free to access on-line. For languages spoken by less than 100,000, I would have to pay \$1000.00, which at the time I could not afford. I do not know if this is still the case."

Inevitably Hassanpour's passion for education and spreading knowledge became more obvious in the ways in which he used his research as educational material, focused on different topics in a myriad of encyclopedias: *Encyclopedia of Genocide* (2003a), *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (2005a), *The Encyclopedia of Diasporas* (2005b), *Encyclopedia of Television* (2014), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Blum and Hassanpour 1996), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia* (2002), *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1990, 1995), *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa* (Hassanpour and Mojab, 2004) *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World* (Hassanpour, and Mojab 2004b), *Encyclopedia of women and Islamic Cultures: Family, law and politics* (2003b).

In retrospect, one could see the scope and depth of his productive work and how his theoretical insight was largely shaped and evolved as a result of his seminal dissertation (1989) "*The Language Factor in National Development: The Standardization of the Kurdish Language, 1918-1985*", which was published in 1992 under the title *Kurdish Nationalism and Language*. His discussion of bi-standardisation for the Kurdish language became a template for those who believe in and practice linguistic plurality within different regions of "Kurdistan". The theoretical orientation and pragmatic concern of the work

has become an increasingly significant issue, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan, where many insist on privileging Sorani over Kurmanji as the official and standard language.

Social and Marxian theories of modernisation informed his work. Modernity as a recurrent ideological framework became a locus for his understanding of the Kurdish nationalist movement and the role of language in nation building projects. One of Hassanpour's dismays was that modernity had not actualised in Kurdish societies, as they were not culturally and socioeconomically coetaneous with modernism. Consequently, he argued that the Kurdish society has been lagging behind and that the Kurds never fared well politically after Kurdish independent principalities that had retained their linguistic, cultural, geographic, demographic, and economic integrity lost their sovereignty; thus, their collapse left far-reaching implications for political processes and transformations and linguistic boundaries and divisions. It is against this background that he revisited and shed light on the origin, development, and rise of Kurdish nationalism and the historical impediments to its fulfilment. He was the one of first scholars to study the historiography of Kurdish nationalist movements and formulate its different phases ranging from ideational representations of nationalism in the 16th century literature to tribal and feudal forms following the dismantlement of the principalities to a burgeoning modern nationalism during the 19th century, represented in the works of the vanguard of Kurdish modernist intelligentsia, Haji Koyi, for whom both a literate culture ('the pen') and political power ('the sword') were the required a double necessity as opposed to tribal nationalists who sought and seek to seize political power and hang onto the existing traditional structures .

For Hassanpour as a social and political theorist, language occupied a core principle in the modernist framework, but it could only be understood with attention to the mediation between language and socio-political processes and literate culture and developments that began to emerge; he developed formidable frameworks and analyses of these principles over the course of his academic life. Methodologically he introduced a Marxian perspective into his analysis of the Kurdish language as he laid the ground for a democratic legacy by rejecting the linguistic hegemony of one language and espousing and proposing language rights and linguistic pluralism, an issue that he made one of his primary goals during more than five decades of research.

Most of us recognise and remember him for his legacy of Kurdish language rights. With very few sources and resources available to him, he made his scholarly work the study of histories and trajectories of Kurdish nationalism (2009) and national oppression (1994; 2008); he took up the term "linguicide" (Hassanpour 2000; 2012a, 2012b), to which most Kurds have been subjected, to show how language is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequalities and oppressive conditions. Slowly but persistently he succeeded in opening a new academic field for the study of the long neglected Kurdish language and culture, and set the international academic stage for scrutiny of

language rights in defence of the protection and preservation of the Kurdish language. Hassanpour, through his situated work, used every opportunity to challenge a century of Kurdish exclusion from literacy and cultural marginalisation and highlighted the need for structural and democratic transformations in successive despotic and chauvinistic governments that have colonial roots or imperialistic connections. For Hassanpour, even when he was a student, national liberation would have remained a distant dream without powerful social and political movements. In reasserting his position, he argued, “It is relatively easy, in countries where linguistic pluralism is tolerated, to “reduce a language to writing”, to compile dictionaries and text books, to write grammars, to create tens of thousands of scientific terms. In other words, it needs a handful of experts to develop the *corpus* of a language. It requires, however, a revolution, a centuries old long struggle to enhance the *status* of a language” (1993a: 52). He convinced a number of linguists to break with that tradition of silence with respect to language discrimination and subordination; through his tireless work the Kurdish language and human rights became intrinsically interwoven as he persistently argued that “No other language has been repressed as Kurdish in modern times, not only the language, but culture, way of life, clothing, and folklore” (Gullistan, 11 August 2014). His study of language and nationalism broadened his intellectual vision and deepened his interest in the interaction of modern technologies with Kurdish traditional society (Hassanpour, 2007), musical traditions and forms and Kurdish oral traditions and folklore (Hassanpour, 1989b; 1990,) both for their literary, linguistic, and aesthetic features and their depiction of the lived experiences of the Kurdish people.

Another distinctive quality of Hassanpour’s sociolinguistic theory of language was his integrative scientific epistemology grounded in history, linguistics, and communication studies. He was interested in the living language and the ways in which language offers an insight into social, cultural, and gender relations in capitalist and feudalistic societies. This sociolinguistic framework (Hymes, 2003) has nothing to do with Chomskian Generative Theory, but as a sociolinguistic Marxian paradigm, it has everything to do with the dialectical intersection of language and society, a perspective that, at least on the political plane, has won the admiration of Noam Chomsky, the prominent American linguist and intellectual. Hassanpour’s approach has invigorated a more socially based critical analysis of not only the linguistic ecology of Kurdish dialects and their distribution, but a diversity of related socio-historical topics of investigation and engagement including but not limited to modernity, the Kurdish question, gender, genocide, nationhood and nationalism, media, diaspora, music, lexicography, scientific ethics, language standardisation, language ideology, language and human rights, literacy and education, and language policy and planning.

Although most of us know Professor Hassanpour as a sociolinguist, he preferred to be seen in his more inclusive and interdisciplinary capacity as a

reflexive radical intellectual rather than a compartmentalised academician aloof from social and political issues of his time. Such a marriage of methodology and theory had taken root, but became concretised in his pursuit of Communication Studies during a time that it had just emerged as a new field of study. This was a perfect match for his imaginative and critical ability in its intersections with Sociolinguistics, both of which afforded him a more incisive insight into the dynamic and multifaceted world of language and media whose boundaries were constantly shifting and expanding. The combined disciplines along with his political activism allowed him to concern himself with macro socio-historical issues and their effects in conducting original research about the role of language, drawing on innovative and eclectic approaches to reach wider audiences. Recognising the plurality of media and its revolutionising effect, Hassanpour was able to make significant contributions to media studies combined with his sociolinguistic analysis as he observed and participated in the paradigm shifts of his era.

Hassanpour's novel methods enabled him to integrate observational, historical, and sociolinguistic data about the Kurdish diasporic community to elucidate how the advent and spread of the digital and satellite revolution (1998a) for diasporic Kurds who had been deprived of print media, was a significant sea change in their display of linguistic, cultural, and political sentiments. His fieldwork on Med-TV became the basis of several published papers about how diasporic Kurds were empowered to create and envision a sociolinguistic space, and achieve a "sovereignty in the sky" that enabled them "to evade the borders of the Turkish state, and to exercise limited sovereignty over the Kurdish population of the country. Their important project of building a state was, however, defeated by the nation state system" (2003c: 87). He aptly used the case of Med-TV to challenge poststructuralists' claims about "egalitarianism of the virtual world as well as postmodernist claims about the emergence of an open, fluid contingent and uncertain world" (Ibid, 83).

My direct encounter with Professor Hassanpour came about in 2010 when, in my capacity as the president of the Kurdish American Education Society (KAES), I invited him to be the keynote speaker at the First North American Conference on the Kurdish Language and Culture at the University of California in Los Angeles, and he offered to participate in the conference via Skype. As he noticed my dismay, he assured me that the digital technology was immersive and interactive enough for our purpose. At the same time, he sent me one of his articles, "The tongue has no bones, but it can break many bones," in which he deconstructs the relation between discourse and power, more specifically Innis's assertion that "talking has lost ground to 'mechanized communication'" (2006: 312). The focus of the article was the analysis of proverbs, constitutive of cultural meanings from different languages including Kurdish, and the ways in which they encode and re-enact social hierarchies, inequalities, and relations when it comes to speaking. In challenging Innis, who contended that "face to face communication is by contrast interactional and,

dialectal, talk is not,” Hassanpour argues, “Innis subjected the internet to the same test. Does it contribute to dialogue, critical thinking, democratic life or is it another more complex medium for creating monopolies of knowledge and power?” (p.312). My scepticism dissipated as the Skype video conferencing was successful in conveying our distinguished speaker’s heart-warming message about the promising prospects for and direction of the Kurdish language and Kurdish Studies.

One of Professor Hassanpour’s hallmarks was his precocity in applying critical scrutiny to dialectal studies of typologies and variability of Kurdish speech communities; he often drew on the anthropological emic/etic perspective to argue that prescriptive linguists’ classification of Hewrami was “no less ideological than the native genealogy” (1998b: 45). His probing analysis in the introduction of (Soltani, 1998) *An Anthology of Gorani Kurdish Poetry* is illuminating as he challenges the philological genealogy and structural taxonomy linguists have used in their typology of Hewrami, both of which have advanced the idea that Hewrami is not a dialect of Kurdish but a distinct language, not realising that such an approach could be used politically against the speech community’s self-designation and other Kurds’ identification of the speech community as Kurds, i.e., against “aspirations of the native speakers” themselves.

In his critical reviews he was quick to highlight the significance of history and the inextricable link between methodology and theory in his sociolinguistic appraisal of seemingly “objective” and apolitical” works (Hassanpour, 2000) that, in his words, converge on “theoretical and ideological commitments from the viewpoint of the state that rules over the Kurds.” For instance, in his review of *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (1993) he uncovers the theoretical justifications and political discourse of “Persian nationalists” who deem Kurdish demands for “autonomy and independence as not legitimate and [are] reluctant to apply the concept ‘language’ to the Kurdish speech and prefer to use ‘dialect’ or ‘vernacular’ ” (p.121). Hassanpour’s rhetorical strength lies in his ability to uncover the institutional, personal, and ideological interests and implications inherent in the post-structuralists’ outlook such as that of Entessar, who attributes no historical agency to the subjugated nations and their movements, thus denying them the right to challenge the status quo and state structures of power and instead legitimising repressive states under the guise of “objective” and “apolitical” disinterested research. In the same vein, in response to Argun, a critic of his article on Med- TV (1999), Hassanpour demonstrates how the author, in the guise of objectivity, justifies the “state centrist analysis as objective. [and thereby]... discredits critical assessments of the Kemalist regime and thus blaming the critics rather than the perpetrators of linguistic, ethnocide, and ethnic cleansing.” (pp.105-114). As Hassanpour has repeatedly shown, only a critical paradigm based on dialectics of dialogic discourse can shed light on how such discursive frames maintain the status quo and the symbolic dominance and violence of the ruling class.

Hassanpour's critical appraisal was also extended to Kurdish lexicographic models invoking preferred language ideologies. He was often dismayed at Kurdish nationalists' discourse and their "narrow and low horizons." In his view, Kurdish nationalist intellectuals woefully and wrongfully have attributed the linguistic problems of Kurdish to the presence and influence of foreign borrowings, which they have associated with national domination and subordination; as a corollary, since the turn of the century they have engaged in a ceaseless purification crusade to rid the language of commonly used and assimilated foreign words, which in turn has "crippled, disabled, and impoverished the language". His reviews (2012c, 2012d) of two dictionaries by Karadaghi (2006) and Ruhani (2007, 2008) provide a critical assessment of the merits and limitations of each dictionary. Drawing on an extensive knowledge of lexicography, etymology, philology, lexicographic theory, inter- and intra-lingual communication, electronically mediated communication, multilingual contexts, and translation he brings an astoundingly detailed analysis of language ideologies and political pressure that have compelled the lexicographers to "...take the role of language planners if only because they engage in intensive lexical engineering. However, they undermine their own authority by pursuing an extremist purist policy which seriously constrains the lexical repertoire of the language" (p.190). In contextualising his arguments in relation to diachronic and historical landscapes, on the productive nature of linguistic resources, he always stressed the fact language change is a fact of life. He often lamented the fact that such a nationalist language policy, notably in the case of Sorani, had impeded the modernisation of the language and "Instead of enhancing the vitality of Kurdish, this purist politics has inadvertently contributed to the state sponsored linguicidal policy of impoverishing and de-intellectualizing the language" (p.193). He found such an attitude a serious threat to the diversity of language varieties, multiplicity of scripts, and greater interface and interaction among speakers of different Kurdish dialects. His concern and quest for social justice in language policy also compelled him to criticise those who advocate for the primacy of Sorani over Kurmanji. Drawing on documented data on the number, range, and type of publications in the span of three hundred years from the earliest time in the 16th century to 20th century, he often validated the fact that Kurmanji has a richer, longer, and deeper history and should not be judged as "inferior or less" of a language. He deemed such views as "chauvinistic".

Hassanpour's contributions and intellectual commitment to feminism remained an integral part of his work and activism. He explored feminism as a lens to gain an insight into language ideologies in patriarchal societies in which sexism and the oppressive conditions under which women live are indexed and reproduced in and through language. Based on a lexical and semantic corpus of the Sorani dialect, Hassanpour (2001b) convincingly shows that despite the fact that "grammatical gender is absent" in the language variety, in its sociocultural dimension Sorani encodes and reproduces gender hierarchies and inequalities, reflecting social stratifications which perpetuate domestic violence against

women, their subordination, and honour killings (Mojab and Hassanpour, 2002). His work and collaboration with his lifelong partner and co-author, Shahrzad Mojab, was not limited to academic work, but extended to feminist activism and social movements to end gender discrimination and masculine-normative practices.

Another topic that he thoroughly researched and wrote and spoke about was the study of the complex role of Kurdish intelligentsia with a particular attention to their discourses, intellectual biography, history, political movements, and trends in the context of modernity. He argued that the struggle between traditional nationalism and modernity is still unfolding and that the unfulfilled modernity in “Kurdistan” has undermined the linguistic security and vitality of the broader Kurdish populations in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, a process that has been compounded by the inability of the language to respond to the demands of modernity.

Hassanpour enthusiastically participated in conversations about the role of Kurdish intellectuals. He found common ground in both political and literary theory with progressive and radical intellectuals such as Koyi, Goran, and Cigerxwîn. Nevertheless, he insisted that the interpretive frameworks proposed by nationalist intelligentsia such as Massoud Muhammad and Jamal Nabez are inadequate and misleading. As a Marxist, his own outlook diverged from traditional nationalists in vision and politics as he always stressed the needs of the more oppressed classes and women, rights for which the nationalists in his view were not prone to champion beyond nationalist rights and reforms. His own life as an independent uncompromising thinker was that of a true intellectual whose role he eloquently defined as one “involved in intellectual work, struggle, and research, particularly in the context of present and the future to show a path, a horizon, towards which we should set out” (Rawej, November 9, 2014).

Professor Hassanpour’s many writings will continue to become an integral part of Kurdish scholarship that has grown into impressive streams of contributions. He brought the Kurdish language from anonymity and ambiguity to a household familiarity; if he turned to the past with unforgiving scrutiny, it was to find a way towards a better and brighter future for the marginalised and the oppressed. He has created ample works (whether one agrees or disagrees with them) to be taken up by scholars and political activists to re-examine scholarship trends and social movements. He did so himself in many conferences, lectures, and interviews, drawing on his expansive interdisciplinary knowledge and the power of theory to promote constructive and critical conversations about a diversity of synthesised ideas in politics, language, media, education, literature, and literacy, educating Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars, activists, and the general public alike on critical issues of our times.

Indeed as a teacher Professor Hassanpour practiced what he preached. He lectured, wrote, spoke out, organised, participated in, and critiqued social movements. After the rise of the Islamic Republic in Iran, as one of the

founders of the Association of Protection of Freedom and Revolution, he is known to have contributed to the formation of *benkas* (local councils) in my hometown, Sanandaj, where in 1980 I found some of my young kin engaging in sophisticated discussions on political affairs of the day. He also played a leading role in organising the historic en masse migration from Sanandaj to Marivan, in which hundreds of thousands of people from my hometown and villages took part to stop the aggression of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This was a revolutionary movement, the likes of which no one has seen since.

We can now gauge his unique and ubiquitous political presence and influence as an uncompromising opponent of all despotic and exploitative systems. Hassanpour, as a student, had picked up the banner of a new generation of radical intellectuals, carried it with him to protest marches from Europe to the U.S as a student organiser, to Canadian universities as a professor, to *Demaze*, as an editor, and to the hundreds of scholarly publications as an author and researcher, the result of which has appeared in his influential works, which continue to draw national and international attention. His vision of human rights and political movements was not limited to “Kurdistan”; his brave activism was always juxtaposed and intertwined with progressive movements throughout Iran, Iraq, Syria, the United States, Nepal, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa, Latin America, Armenia, and Palestine.

When he died, his internationalism was honoured not only by Kurds but progressive people and organisations from different parts of the world. Professor Hassanpour researched and synthesised disciplines, even critiqued Marxism, the most important source of his inspiration, and integrated his extensive knowledge to define and refine his theories for universal freedom from any forms of exploitation. From his first work on Goran’s revolutionary role in Kurdish poetry to his last, extensive field work and archival research on the socio-historical history of the Peasant Revolt of 1952 in Mukri Kurdistan, to be published posthumously, he saw history not only as the locus for the study of social movements largely ignored but as a testing ground for sharpening epistemologies and theories of political and class struggles, from which future generations will benefit tremendously.

What permeates in his work is his constant quest for “theory as the ultimate and the most complex form of consciousness” to guide his intellectual commitment and contributions to multiple disciplines with the primary preoccupation to understand and transform broader sociocultural conditions for marginalised peoples everywhere. He fostered a profound passion for peace and social justice along with a universal quest and struggle for humanism. For those who seek to discover his path, they will undoubtedly inherit a wealth of vast knowledge and an enduring legacy of liberty and theory of knowledge from an astute, gentle, generous, courageous, and scrupulous researcher, a tireless intellectual, and a revolutionary who remained fully committed to a deep humanity throughout his life.

References

- Blum, S., & Hassanpour, A. (1996). 'The morning of freedom rose up': Kurdish popular song and the exigencies of cultural survival. *Popular Music*, 15(3), 325-343.
- Clement, A. (2012). Fallahin on Trial in Colonial Egypt: Apprehending the Peasantry through Orality, Writing, and Performance. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Toronto. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.csulb.idm.oclc.org/docview/1634343605> (last accessed 10/7/2017).
- Chasm Andaz. (1996, October 4). *Sokhanrani-ye Doktor Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvDZg6dWXEI&t=1124s> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Sh. Fateh. (2017, August 1). *Be yâd-e rafîq-e Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q61tv9owZ-c> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- H. Ghazi. (2017, July 31). *Rêzênan le Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC0Uunnz2vE> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- H. Ghazi. (2014, September 11). *Interview with Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w075NdfQJg&t=933s> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Hassanpour, A. (1989a). The Language Factor in National Development: The Standardization of the Kurdish Language, 1918-1985. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana-Champaign, IL.
- Hassanpour, A. (1989b). Bayt [popular ballad]. In *Encyclopedia Iranica*. (Vol. 4, pp. 11-12). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hassanpour, A. (1989c). Bukan. In *Encyclopedia Iranica*. (Vol. 4, p. 511). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hassanpour, A. (1989d). Çahriq. In *Encyclopedia Iranica*. (Vol. 4, pp. 644-645). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hassanpour, A. (1992). *Nationalism and language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985*. San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press.
- Hassanpour, A. (1993a). The pen and the sword: Literacy, education and revolution. In P. Freebody & A. R. Welch (Eds.). (1993). *Kurdistan. Knowledge, culture and power: International perspectives on literacy as policy and practice*, (35-54). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hassanpour, A. (1993b). Kurdish Studies: Orientalist, Positivist, and Critical Approaches: Review Essay. *Middle East Journal*, 47 (1), 119-122. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328533> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Hassanpour, A. (1994). The Kurdish Experience. *Middle East Report*, 24/4(189), 2-7.
- Hassanpour, A., Skutnabb-Kangas, T., & Chyet, M. (1996). The non-education of Kurds: A Kurdish perspective. *International Review of Education*, 42(4), 367-379.
- Hassanpour, A. (1998a). Satellite Footprints as National Borders: MED-TV and the Extraterritoriality of State Sovereignty. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 18(1), 53-72.
- Hassanpour, A. (1998b). The Identity of Hewrami speakers: Reflections on the theory and ideology of comparative philology. In A. Soltani (Ed). (1998). *Anthology of Gorani Kurdish poetry*, (35-49). London: Soane Trust for Kurdistan.
- Hassanpour, A. (1999). Modernity, popular sovereignty and the Kurdish question: a rejoinder to Argun. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 19(1), 105-114.

- Hassanpour, A. (2000). The politics of a-political linguistics: Linguists and linguicide. In R. Phillipson (Ed.) (2000). *Rights to Language: Equity, Power and Education*, (33-39). Mahawi, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hassanpour, A., & Blum, S. (2001a). Naser Razzazi. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. (Vol. 20, p. 890). London: Macmillan.
- Hassanpour, A. (2001b). The (re)production of patriarchy in the Kurdish language In Sh. Mojab (Ed.) (2001). *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, (227-263). Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda.
- Hassanpour, A. (2002). Language purification. In *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*. (Vol. 3, p. 442). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Hassanpour, A. (2003a). An overview of Kurds. In *Encyclopedia of Genocide*. (pp. 24-36).
- Hassanpour, A. (2003b). Political and social movements: Ethnic and minority. Iran and Afghanistan. In *Encyclopedia of women and Islamic cultures: Family, law and politics*. (Vol. 2, pp. 571-573). Leiden: Brill.
- Hassanpour, A. (2003c). Diaspora, homeland and communication technologies. In K. H. Karim (Ed.) (2003). *The Media of Diaspora*, (76-88). New York: Routledge.
- Hassanpour, A. (2004a). Kurdish Revolts. In *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East*. (Vol. 2, pp. 1339-1342). New York: Macmillan Reference.
- Hassanpour, A., & Mojab, Sh. (2004b). Kurdish Diaspora. In *Encyclopedia of Diasporas. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*. (Vol. 1, pp. 214-224). Guilford NC: Springer.
- Hassanpour, A. (2005a). The Kurds. In *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*. (Vol. 1, pp. 632-637). New York: Macmillan Reference.
- Hassanpour, A. (2006). The tongue has no bone, but it breaks many bones. *Ideas: The Arts and Science Review*, 3(2), 22-23.
- Hassanpour, A. (2007). *The Oral and Written Traditions of Kurdistan*. New York: Routledge.
- Hassanpour, A. (2008a). Helebce duway bîst salan. Part 1. *Kurdistan Report*, 405, 6.
- Hassanpour, A. (2008b). Helebce duway bîst salan. Part 2. *Kurdistan Report*, 406, 6.
- Hassanpour, A. (2009). The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41(1), 154-156.
- Hassanpour, A., Sheyholislami, J., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2012a). Introduction. Kurdish: Linguicide, resistance and hope. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 217, 1-18.
- Hassanpour, A. (2012b). The indivisibility of the nation and its linguistic divisions. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 217, 49-73.
- Hassanpour, A. (2012c). Politics and language ideology in Kurdish lexicography. Review of *The Azadi English-Kurdish dictionary*, by R. Karadaghi, and the *Kurdistan University Persian-Kurdish dictionary*, by M. M. Ruhani. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 217, 189-194.
- Hassanpour, A. (2016). Amir Husyan Aryanpour and the Teaching of Marxist Sociology in the 1960's. *Iran Namag*, 1(1), 1-54.
- Hassanpour, A. (2017). *Bar farâz-e-monj-e nuvin-e kumunism. On the New Wave of New Communism*. CreateSpace: Communist Party of Iran.
- G. Ike (2011, August 8). *Interview with Prof. Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEVYkBMRHml> (last accessed 17/10/2017).

- G. Ike. (2014, November 20). *Interview with Professor Amir Hassanpour*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEVYkBMRHmI> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Hymes, D. (2003). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Colchester: Psychology Press.
- A. Kamangar. (2017, August 8). *Goftogu bâ Doktor Shabzad Mojab bamsar-e zende-yâd-e Amir Hassanpour, negâhi be zendegi va afkâr-e u*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-uo8zqHHbo&t=287s> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Karadaghi, R. (2006). *The Azadi: English-Kurdish Dictionary*. Tehran: Ehsan Publishing.
- Mojab, S., & Hassanpour, A. (2002). Thoughts on the Struggle against “Honor Killing”. *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 16 (1/2), 83.
- Ruhani, M. M. (2007-8). *Farhang-e Dâneşgâh-e Kordestan, fârsî-kurdî. Kurdistan University Persian-Kurdish Dictionary*. Sanandaj: Kurdistan University.
- Scatamburlo, V. L. (1994). *Critical Pedagogy, Political Correctness and the Media*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of Windsor, Windsor. Retrieved from <http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2584&context=etd> (last accessed 17/10/2017).
- Sheyholislami, J., & Sharifi, A. (2016). “It is the Hardest to Keep”: Kurdish as a Heritage Language in the United States. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 237, 75-98