"BECAUSE I SPEAK JIBBALI …": A CASE STUDY OF THE USE OF MINORITY LANGUAGES IN DHOFARI EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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Abstract. *The goal of this paper is to investigate the extent to which the linguistic diversity present in the Dhofar region located in southern Oman is reflected in educational settings for the purpose of creating inclusive teaching and learning practices. The goal of such practices is to enhance educational experiences of students. The paper specifically focuses on the use of Jibbali, an endangered indigenous South Arabian language as one of the minority languages spoken in Dhofar. The study aims to answer the question of the level of multilingualism in the Dhofar region, and whether such multilingualism is reflected in the educational settings. The methodology of case study is adopted where 5 multilingual female university students enrolled in a private university in Dhofar recorded two hours of their daily interactions both on and off campus, and a follow-up semi-structured interview was conducted with two of the participants. The results of the study show that participants draw heavily on their rich linguistic repertoires in their daily interactions; however, the current educational practices fall short of reflecting that reality. The results also show that participants are aware of the disparity between the level of multilingualism and the educational practices in the region. The major conclusion of the study is that shared indigenous language(s) primarily tag the context of the interaction as informal and intimate. A major implication of the study is that in addition to English, as a medium instruction, and Modern Standard Arabic, as the official language of the state, space should be given to the use of indigenous languages in educational settings. These settings can make a significant contribution by changing attitudes through creating awareness of the value of local languages, by serving as a forum for training, educating speakers of those languages on the maintenance and revitalization of those endangered languages, and by creating an educational space that allows for the use of minority languages, as a step towards achieving a more equitable, safe and inclusive learning environment.*

Key words: *diversity, minority languages, Oman, Jibbali*

1. INTRODUCTION

UNESCO considers education a universal human right. It emphasizes the importance of creating equitable opportunities for all students to learn. This emphasis on equity, inclusion and diversity in education changes pedagogical practices at all levels of education and takes into consideration cultural and linguistic rights of minorities. Many communities in the world are multilingual and therefore, the use of multiple languages in the daily lives of people constitutes normal practices. In this context, UNESCO emphasizes the importance of multilingual education, which includes the use of at least three languages: (i) the mother tongue(s), (ii) a regional or national language, (iii) the international language.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate to what extent the languages of minorities are included in the educational settings in the Sultanate of Oman. Specifically, it attempts to answer the question of whether or not the minority languages that are spoken in the Dhofar region of Oman reflect the linguistic diversity of this region. The claim is made here that it is important to acknowledge and include the minority languages in the educational settings. By sharing the space with Arabic, as the official language of the country, and English, as a lingua franca of the diverse expat communities that reside and work in Oman, the presence of the minority languages in the classroom would result in more equitable and inclusive pedagogical practices for the benefits of all students. Moreover, the inclusion of the minority languages and cultures into the classroom will facilitate supportive, effective and appropriate classroom environment and will enhance teaching and learning practices.

2. DHOFAR REGION AS A DIVERSE, MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY

In one of her talks, Polinsky (2015) states that for many years, monolingualism was perceived as a norm rather than an aberration of the norm. The nationalistic agenda of many states dictated that people who belong to one state should speak the language of the state. Thus, for many years monolingualism was presented as an undisputable fact. Nowadays, the diversity of the world communities has been acknowledged and recognized in many international documents. For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) among other rights recognizes the linguistic rights of the minorities.

The Dhofar governorate of the Sultanate of Oman, which is located in southern Oman, presents one example of such diverse and multilingual community. Ethnologue (Eberhard et al. 2023) lists 10 living languages that have been spoken in Oman. For the purpose of this paper, a brief description of these languages is limited only to those that are used by the communities in the Dhofar governorate. These languages are Bathari, Dhofari spoken Arabic (herein Dhofari Arabic), Harsusi, Hobyót, Mehri, and Shehri, which is also known as Jibbali. These languages belong to the Afro-Asiatic language family and are known as Modern South Arabian languages. With the exception of Dhofari Arabic, these languages are endangered; however, they differ in their vitality status. For example, Bathari has no first language (L1) users, Harsusi and Hobyót have fewer than 10,000 L1 users, whereas Mehri and Shehri (Jibbali) has between 10,000 up to 1 million L1 users. Ethnologue states that Shehri (Jibbali) is used as the first language by a decreasing number of children. It should be noted here that all of these languages are spoken languages only and they do not have a writing system.

In addition to the indigenous languages, two other languages occupy a prominent position among the people residing in the Dhofar governorate, namely Arabic and English. The Basic Statute of the State that operates as the constitution in Oman, names Arabic as the official language of the State (The Basic Statute of the State, Article 3 1996). Although it is not explicitly stated in the document, the variety of Arabic that the document refers to is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). English is used as the lingua franca of a very diverse population of the expat community, and it is also used as a medium of instruction (EMI) in all post-secondary institutions located in Dhofar. In addition, there are also languages of the expat communities that work and reside in Dhofar, such as Bengali, Tagalog, Hindi, Urdu, Malayalam, Tamil, and different varieties of Arabic (e.g., Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Sudanese), to name just a few.

In order to protect the diversity and the rights of the linguistic minorities, Oman has signed a number of international conventions (Eberhard at al. 2023). One of them is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) that acknowledges among other rights, the right of indigenous peoples to establish and control their educational systems according to their cultural traditions of teaching and learning. The Declaration also states that children, wherever it is possible, should have access to education in their own culture and language. On the level of the state, the rights of the cultural and linguistic minorities are protected by Article 17 of the Basic Statute of Oman (1996) where it is stated that all citizens in Oman have equal rights and duties, and therefore, there should be no discrimination on the grounds of language.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research (see e. g., Gözpınar 2018; Kana'iaupuni et al. 2017) has shown that the inclusion of indigenous cultures and languages in pedagogical practices enhances the linguistic, cultural, and affective strengths of minority students. Moreover, inclusive pedagogical practices positively affect the academic outcomes of minority students, increase their self-esteem and self-belonging to the community. It has been shown that the practice of bringing minority languages and cultures in the classroom results in building resilience, confidence and positive self-image of the students. This practice also assists in language revitalization and restoration of lost cultural practices and beliefs.

Many countries in the world build their education curricula around the inclusion of minority languages in the classroom where minority languages and cultures share the space with the dominant, national languages. For example, in Canada, in addition to English and French as the official languages of the country, attempts have been made to incorporate minority languages in the educational settings. For example, Cummins (2017) discusses the importance of substituting the term additive bilingualism with the term active bilingualism or better active multilingualism "that endorses the legitimacy of dynamic heteroglossic conceptions of bi/multilingualism, or the understanding that languages are intertwined in complex ways in the minds of multilingual individuals" (Cummins 2017, p. 406). In his discussion, Cummins refers to the experiences of educators, who expand the use of multilingual practices to monolingual contexts that are characterized by linguistic diversity. These practices are aimed at raising students' metalinguistic awareness, as well as enhancing their critical understanding of the language and power relationship.

Research has also shown (see e. g., Henriksen et al. 2019) that when the classroom becomes more diverse by including other languages and cultures in the classroom, it also benefits the majority cultures. The benefits of acknowledging and embracing diversity in the classroom are in gaining personal insights, developing respect and understanding of the position of the other, and in removing biases and stereotypes. Studies (see e.g., McCarty et al. 2015) report that students who are involved in immersion or multilingual programs have improved their academic and holistic well-being.

In the Omani context, most of the research focuses on the results of the educational reforms or on the use of EMI (see e.g., Denman and Al-Mahrooqi 2019; Tuzlukova et al. 2023). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there are few studies that discuss the linguistic diversity of Oman and consider the impact this diversity and inclusion might have on pedagogical practices. One of the studies conducted in the Omani context discusses linguistic diversity through the issues of language planning and policy in Oman (Al-Issa 2020). In his study of the linguistic landscape of Oman, Al-Issa makes the following claims. First, he states that decades of using imported measures of proficiency, such as the use of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to measure the level of English proficiency, seeking the help and expertise of western accreditation and quality assurance agencies, and the use of textbooks imported from English-speaking countries, such as the UK, Australia or New Zealand, have not resulted in high levels of proficiency in English among Omani graduates. Second, the adoption of imported textbooks from neighboring countries, such as Qatar, and later Jordan, in the teaching of MSA, has not helped improve the MSA proficiency of Omani students. He proposes a number of solutions to address the challenges of low language proficiency in English and MSA. One of them is to seek the expertise of highly trained local researchers and teacher educators in order to develop local instruments of teaching and assessment that can effectively measure students' proficiency in English and MSA. With regards to the indigenous languages of Oman (e.g., Jibbali, Mehri, Bathari, Harsusi spoken in Dhofar, and Baluchi, Zajali, Swahili spoken in other parts of Oman), he states that the adoption of indigenous languages in the educational system might not be a good idea, as it runs counter to the goal of the government of Oman to have Omanis perceive themselves as one nation that speak one language. This is the image that the government is determined to foster, as it is believed to help Oman move closer and faster towards modernity.

The present study addresses the gap identified in the literature by focusing on the study of linguistic diversity in the context of one private university located in the Dhofar governorate, and the impact that this diversity might have on the experiences of its students.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the description presented in section 2, the Dhofar governorate appears to be a diverse, multicultural and multilingual region of Oman where the rights of the linguistic minorities are acknowledged and protected by the international conventions as well as the state constitution. Thus, the question that is investigated in this paper is the extent to which this diversity is reflected in educational settings for the purpose of creating inclusive teaching and learning practices, the goal of which is to enhance the learning experiences of students. Specifically, this study answers two questions. The goal of the first question is to investigate the assumption about the extent of diversity and multilingualism of the Dhofar region by

observing the linguistic repertoire (LR) of the Dhofari students enrolled in a private university located in the Dhofar governorate. The second question focuses on the use of minority language spoken in Dhofar in educational settings, and the impact of its inclusion on the educational experiences of Dhofari students. Throughout this paper the term LR is used following Spolsky (2021) as an actual language practice or practices that are used by people living in multilingual communities. LRs are not fixed, as language users modify and adjust them depending on the linguistic varieties they are exposed to in their speech communities.

5. METHODOLOGY

Five female university students whose age ranges from 18 to 22 participated in this case study. The participants of the study identify themselves as multilingual speakers, as in their daily practices, they use the following languages: Hobyot, Jibbali, Dhofari Arabic, English, and MSA. For this case study, the participants were asked to record themselves for two hours within one week by using the recording devices installed on their smart phones. The recordings took place in different places inside the university campus (e.g., in the classroom, in the cafeteria) and outside the campus (e.g., being in the car while driving to the university). Selected samples of their recordings were transcribed and then glossed following the conventions established in the field of linguistics. In addition, selected participants took part in the semi-structured interview that was transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes.

6. MULTILINGUAL LINGUISTIC PRACTICES OF DHOFARI STUDENTS

The purpose of this section is to show that the LRs of the Dhofar university students are quite diverse. The languages that the participants use on a daily basis are not limited only to the languages prescribed to them by the institutional policy, which dictates the use of EMI, and Arabic, as the official language of the state. They use their diverse LRs (not always consciously) to achieve the communicative goals of their interaction practices. Consider excerpt (1) of a conversation that takes place on the university campus. The languages that are used in this excerpt are Dhofari Arabic and Jibbali. In this excerpt, three female friends discuss their visit to a mall once the classes are over.

Excerpt 1[1]
Dhofari Arabic
A: ʃ-raaɪ-kan   al-yɔːm   naruħ   al-mɔːl?
         what-think-PRON.2PLF   DEF-day   go.1PL   DEF-mall
         What do you think about going to the mall today?

C: la pli:z   bukrah,   al-yɔːm   ma   agdar
         no please   tomorrow   DEF-day NEG   can.1SG
         ʕend-i   ʃʊɣʊl.
         PREP-1SG   work
         'No please not today; I cannot; I have work to do.'
B: zi:n   bukrah   raħ   naruħ.
         Ok   tomorrow   FUT   go.1PL
         'Ok we will go tomorrow.'

Jibbali
C: ɣɑreɪra   a-nɣad   k-muun?
         tomorrow   FUT-go.1PL   PREP-who
         'Who will we go with tomorrow?'
B: ka-saaieɣ.
         PREP-driver
         'with the driver'
C: keɪf   a-ndafaʕ   he-ʃ   aɣruʃaa-ʃ?
         how   FUT-pay.1PL   PREP-PRON.3SGM   money-3MS
         'How will we pay him his money?'
B: he a-lzam-ʃ   aaχar-aarχ.
         I   FUT-pay-3SM   end-month
         'I will pay him at the end of the month.'

Excerpt (1) shows that the conversation between friends starts in Dhofari Arabic; however, when speaker A leaves the group, speakers B and C switch to Jibbali. Their switch to Jibbali happened for convenience purposes, as Jibbali is the language that they share in the absence of speaker A, who does not speak Jibbali. Their choice of Jibbali also signals closeness and belonging, as Jibbali is often perceived by its speakers as the language used to communicate with people from the inner circle, such as friends and family.

   Now consider excerpt (2). In this excerpt, the friends discuss the arrival time for the driver to take them to the university. The LR of this excerpt includes the following languages: Dhofari Pidgin Arabic (DPA), Hobyot and Jibbali.

Excerpt 2
DPA
         Driver: bukrah fi: roh   dʒaamʕa   saaʕah   kʌm
         tomorrow   PRED go   university   hour   Q
         'What time are you going to the university tomorrow?'
         (literally: 'Tomorrow be go university hour what?')
A: saaʕah waħda   fi: roh.
         hour   one   PRED   go
         'We will go at one o'clock.'
         (literally: 'Hour one be go')
Dhofari Arabic
B: mʌtakadah?   aħis   ɣalatʔti. bukrah   b-anebda b-anebda
         sure   feel.1SG   make.mistake.PAST.2SF tomorrow   b-start.1PL
         saaʕah   θɪnteːn.
         hour   two
         'Are you sure? I think you are mistaken. Tomorrow, we start at two o'clock.'

Hobyot

A: ayah   ðaɣarabk   walaakin   heh   berah   yetaχar
        yes   know.1S   but   he   became   be.2M.late
        wa   tʼwur   yebutʼʕ   nusʼul   a-mħadʼarah   mʌtaχar-aat.
        and   sometime drive.slowly   arrive.1PL   DEF-class   late-PLF
        ʕaʃaan   tʼanah   ʕamurk   hih   yenkaʕ   gabal.
        that's   why   ask.PAST   PRON.3MSG   come.3MS   early
        'Yes, I know, but he has been running late recently and sometimes we arrive late
        to classes. That is why I told him to come early.'

Jibbali

B: aah   sʌħ   sʌħ   asʼlaħ-ʃ   beʃ.
        Oh   yes   yes,   do.right.PAST-3MSG   PREP-PRON.3SM
        'Oh yes yes, you did the right thing with him.'

In excerpt (2), speaker A starts the conversation in PDA. The ungrammatical structure fi:
roh 'be go' is used by speaker A to accommodate the driver. DPA is often used in Dhofar
for communication purposes with members of the expat community, who come from
Bangladesh, Pakistan or India. When the message to the driver has been delivered,
speaker A switches to Hobyot signaling the privacy of the follow-up conversation.
Speaker B chooses to respond in Jibbali, as two female friends have the receptive
knowledge of each other's languages. The choice of Hobyot and Jibbali from their LRs
signals the exclusion of the driver and the privacy of their interaction, where they express
their dissatisfaction with the constant lateness of the driver.

   Now consider excerpt (3) where Jibbali and Dhofari Arabic are used interchangeably.
Speaker C starts the conversation and proceeds by using Jibbali, whereas speaker B
insists on the use of Dhofari Arabic.

Excerpt 3
Jibbali

C: ʕaʃ   t-u-n   nɣad   a-kaftiria.
        in   2SF-PRON-1PL   go.1PL   DEF-cafeteria
        'Do you want us to go to the cafeteria?'

Dhofari Arabic

B: ma-gdar;   mʌʃɣuulah.
        NEG-can.1SG   busy.SF
        'I cannot, I'm busy.'

Jibbali

 C: ku-hit   ataherg ʕari:t?
        why-PRON.2SF   speak.2 Arabic?
        'Why are you speaking Arabic?'

Dhofari Arabic

B: maaʃɪ;   b-aroħ,   ʕendi   klaas.
        nothing   FUT-go.1S   PREP-PRON.1S   class.
        'Nothing; I will go; I have a class.'

Excerpt (3) demonstrates that in this conversation, every speaker insists on their own
language and refuses to accommodate. Speaker C starts and continues her conversation in
Jibbali, whereas speaker B chooses Dhofari Arabic. By insisting on Dhofari Arabic and

not willing to switch to Jibbali, speaker B communicates her dissatisfaction with her friend's behavior. Speaker B shows her intention of not switching to Jibbali, as this language is reserved for private interactions between friends and family. Speaker B chooses Dhofari Arabic to distance herself from her friend, as she wants her friend to know that she is upset with her.

In excerpt 4, the conversation takes place between a university instructor and a student. Both of them are speakers of Jibbali. Other students are also present in the classroom.

Excerpt 4
Jibbali

B:	duktur	bek	sˤaħaħt	emteħaan?
	doctor	do.PAST.2MSG	correct.PAST.2SM	exam
	'Doctor did you mark the exam?'			

Dhofari Arabic

I:	liħad	alaan	laʔ.
	until	now	no
	'Not yet; no.'		

Dhofari Arabic

B:	tamaam ʃukrʌn.
	Ok thanks
	'Ok, thanks.'

In excerpt (4), speaker B, who is a female, uses Jibbali to ask her male instructor about the results of the exam. The instructor chooses to respond in Dhofari Arabic. His choice of Dhofari Arabic over Jibbali can be explained by his intention to keep this conversation with a female student formal, as Jibbali is often perceived by its speakers as an intimate language of communication between friends and family. Speaker B recognizes his intention by immediately switching to Dhofari Arabic. By doing this, she agrees with the instructor to keep this conversation formal and available to other students present in the classroom, who may not be speakers of Jibbali.

Excerpts (1-4) presented and discussed in this section demonstrate the languages used by the speakers of the Dhofar speech community. Multiple languages that are included in the rich LRs of Dhofari speakers are heard on the university campus. The excerpts also show that speakers' choices of language do not depend on the prescribed institutional or state policies designed to regulate the use of languages. Instead, speakers' choices of language are determined by the contexts and the communicative intent of messages that are conveyed to their interlocutors.

7. INCLUDING MINORITY LANGUAGES IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:
   THE CASE OF JIBBALI

The purpose of this section is to answer the second research question that investigates the extent of the inclusion of Jibbali, a minority language, in educational settings, and the effect that this inclusion (or a lack thereof) might have on the educational experiences of the students. This question is answered by discussing the results of the semi-structured

interview with Raya and Maryam, two female multilingual university students, who participated in this study.

In addition to English, MSA and Dhofari Arabic, Raya and Maryam speak Jibbali. However, they have different experiences of how they use this language. Jibbali is used as a language of communication in Maryam's family, as her parents choose to communicate in Jibbali with their children. Maryam evaluates her proficiency in Jibbali as advanced. However, she states that sometimes she has problems communicating her ideas in Jibbali. From time to time, she has difficulties understanding her parents, as "they use some words that we do not use them [such as numbers], names of trees, some herbs, the names of the rocks". In addition to Jibbali, Dhofari Arabic occupies a prominent position in Maryam's life. Maryam and her family live in Salalah, and her secondary and post-secondary education has been in Salalah, a major city of the Dhofar governorate where the majority of the population use Dhofari Arabic.

When Maryam started attending school in Salalah, it was a common understanding among the students to use Dhofari Arabic only, as everyone at school spoke it. She explains, "when you enter school and see all people speak Arabic, you speak Arabic. You will be shy to speak Jibbali." When asked how she learned Dhofari Arabic since her home language is Jibbali, she responds that she learned it from school and her friends. She says, "I was confused when other children use the words that I did not know, like *sharpener* (*baraya?*) I did not know … [I asked] what? What? And then I learned it. I discovered new words in Arabic that I did not know at school." She also mentions the importance of TV and social media in her learning of Arabic.

When asked a question about the attitudes of her classmates and teachers who spoke Dhofari Arabic at school to Jibbali, Maryam recalls that children show interest and curiosity. She says, "one of the girls, Sudanese or Yemeni, they will come to ask [me] … can you tell us the Jibbali words for these …" When asked if teachers in her school were showing a similar interest towards Jibbali, Maryam responds by saying that teachers always spoke Dhofari Arabic. She further states that "if we see or hear the teacher who speaks Jibbali, this will be fascinating; I did not see that". She adds that she and her friends, who are Jibbali speakers, internalized the rule of not using Jibbali in front of the teacher. Sometimes she used Jibbali to chat with her friends during the breaks, "but we do not do that, we do not speak in Jibbali in front of the teacher." When asked the question of how she learned this rule of not speaking Jibbali in front of her teacher, she responds, "you can feel it from the atmosphere. You understand it. No one speaks Jibbali; ah maybe the teachers were Egyptian[s]. Other teachers, maybe [were] Jibbali but they [did] not speak Jibbali, but until now I cannot know." She recalls that in high school, she used to have a teacher who gave her instructions in Jibbali, "Maryam, come here. Maryam do this, in Jibbali. And I am like what? What? You are speaking in Jibbali?"

Maryam also reflects on the experiences of her cousins, who attend one of the schools located in the mountains of the Dhofar governorate. She says that contrary to her experiences, they use Jibbali at school all the time, "but school in the mountain is so different; I saw my cousins and they …. use only Jibbali; they do not use Dhofari Arabic." She mentions that Dhofari Arabic is used only when they have an official visitor from the Ministry. Maryam judges the proficiency of her cousins in Dhofari Arabic and in Jibbali and compares it with her proficiency in these two languages. Due to the widespread use of Jibbali at her cousins' school, she concludes that her cousins' proficiency in Jibbali is better; however, Maryam has a better command of Dhofari

Arabic. She states that her cousins speak "broken Arabic". Maryam acknowledges the widespread use of Jibbali in the area where her cousins live. She says that everyone speaks Jibbali in there, even Bengali and Egyptian expats, who live and work in that area. Jibbali is also widely used at schools, according to Maryam. She says, 'teacher[s] explain in Jibbali, especially for children in grade[s] one, two and three. She recalls that her friend told her that when children talk to a teacher, who speaks Jibbali in Jibbali, they might use some Arabic words. However, the teacher will not point it out or reprimand them for their use of Jibbali or for code-switching between the two languages, Dhofari Arabic and Jibbali.

Raya's relationship with Jibbali is different from Maryam's. Raya names Jibbali as her second language that she learned after Dhofari Arabic. She assesses her proficiency in Jibbali as a beginner speaker. One of the reasons for her low level of Jibbali is the lack of early exposure to the language. She says that she "did not have enough input in Jibbali in the early childhood" because [her] parents communicated in Arabic (despite the fact that her mother is a Jibbali speaker). The input in Jibbali was provided to her by other adults in the community. She also observes that if someone has to speak Jibbali, their proficiency in the language should be close to that of a native speaker, as errors are frowned upon by fluent Jibbali speakers and are even treated as signs of disrespect. Raya explains that the language of communication that is used in her family is Dhofari Arabic; however, the predominant language of people who live in her community is Jibbali. Raya and her family use Jibbali when they go outside or when they have Jibbali visitors to their house. When asked about the language of communication and instruction at school, she responds that her school was located in the area where the dominant language is Jibbali. She explains, "the teachers were using Jibbali while talking to each other but in [teaching], no". She adds, "but Jibbali was spoken in my school not during classes but among teachers, among other students, with teachers they would speak Jibbali … during breaks, when you have lunch, when you play together, but not during class time".

When asked about the knowledge of Dhofari Arabic of those children who grew up speaking Jibbali, she states that children who came from the mountains and who were not exposed to any Dhofari Arabic, learned it from mass media. She says, "for this generation their Arabic is mostly mixed with Saudi dialect because most of the Arabic YouTubers are Saudis maybe, and the media in general is Saudi."

In the interview, both Raya and Maryam mention that sometimes children at school are shy to speak Jibbali. Maryam attempts to explain their shyness by bringing up the contrast between formal and informal contexts that dictate the use of one language over the other. She says, "maybe because Jibbali is the language of home and you are comfortable at home with your family … you are at school, formal place, you feel like you do not have to speak Jibbali …. it feels, no, you have to speak in Arabic". Raya agrees with Maryam by saying that there is a social aspect to why some children prefer to speak Dhofari Arabic instead of Jibbali. One of the reasons is that the children want to fit in, and they do not want other children to make fun of them for mispronouncing some Arabic words. In addition, sometimes Jibbali children can be stigmatized into bad behavior and other Jibbali children do not want to be associated with them; therefore, they prefer to speak Arabic instead of Jibbali.

When Maryam and Raya are asked the question of whether Jibbali language and culture were acknowledged and celebrated in their schools, they responded that there were celebrations of languages and cultures at school but not for Jibbali or any other

minority languages (e.g., Mehri). Maryam mentions that "when you enter school, Jibbali language does not show that much. I cannot remember any event, any celebration for Jibbali language. Raya agrees with Maryam by saying, "[these celebration days] are only for Modern Standard Arabic; other dialects are not seen as languages".

Both Raya and Maryam have a strong opinion about the importance of acknowledging minority languages at school. Raya thinks that "they should acknowledge the language maybe in some classes … I think that it should be recognized as a language. It's seen as a dialect that is not that important …I think that it needed to be studied." Maryam expresses her doubts of whether Jibbali can be considered a language or a dialect. In her response to this question, she comments on the importance of the media, for example a "TV program or a cartoon". Then she adds that the language of the media can be Jibbali or Arabic, or both, where the speakers codeswitch between Jibbali and Arabic. During the interview, Maryam and Raya make references to the program titled *Mahat* that was shown on the Oman National TV during Ramadan some time ago. Maryam further notes that "it was fascinating to see in the media in your community someone who can speak like your language on television". Both Maryam and Raya reflect that it was an opportunity for the whole family to gather together in front of TV after Iftar (a meal taken by the family to break their fasting during Ramadan). When the program disappeared, everyone was disappointed. Maryam discusses Mahat, the main character of the program, "it was funny how he deals with things; it was like reality when you do not want to go to work and then make excuse like I'm sick, something like that, and the character will speak Jibbali sometimes, we laugh when he will speak Jibbali". Raya agrees with Maryam that it was a very popular program. She says that the programs that reflect the local language and culture should be offered; however, they should be less stereotypical. She elaborates, "maybe [it should show] less stereotypes because if we watch it now, it would be controversial; at that time everything was funny and OK."

When asked about the use of Jibbali at the university, Raya thinks that at the university level, Jibbali is marginalized. Raya states that the use of Jibbali depends on the interlocutors' gender. For example, it is fine for Jibbali male students to communicate with Jibbali speakers in Jibbali; however, female students are restricted in their use of this language. This is because Jibbali is perceived in the minds of its speakers as a language of a tight-knit community. Thus, it is inappropriate to choose it as a language of communication with a male instructor because this choice of Jibbali signals intimacy in a formal setting. Raya makes an observation that Jibbali at the university level is used less than at school, as this is the language that is not associated with the academic setting.

Maryam expresses her dissatisfaction with some of the members of the Jibbali community, who frown upon or even become angry when someone makes grammatical errors, mispronounces words or code-switches between Dhofari Arabic, Jibbali and English. She reflects, "When I use the Jibbali language with [some Jibbali speakers], they will immediately criticize you or say that it is something about you that you are weak in the Jibbali language… they do not accept switching from Jibbali to Arabic." Therefore, she prefers to use English or Dhofari Arabic while speaking to Jibbali speakers, who do not come from the city. However, she states that Jibbali users can become quite sensitive and angry about the choice of language of a Jibbali speaker. Once Maryam observed the criticism towards her friend, a Jibbali speaker, for her choice of Arabic. A Jibbali female student confronted Maryam's friend with the following question, "Why are you speaking Arabic; you know how to speak Jibbali, right?!

Maryam believes that Jibbali should not be used in the academic setting, and she avoids using it with the teachers who speak Jibbali. She thinks of Jibbali as the language of communication with friends and family. She sates, "Jibbali did not help me succeed academically because, to be honest, the scope of its use and benefit was only at home and for family events only." She reflects that when other students hear Jibbali in the classroom, they feel left out. They assume that if university instructors use Jibbali to communicate with the Jibbali students, they show their preference towards Jibbali speakers over those students who do not speak the language. Her colleagues from the Northern part of Oman believe that Jibbali should not be used in class; however, they express interest and curiosity about the language since they hear it on the university campus between classes. Thus, Maryam was approached and asked by some students to teach them some Jibbali words and phrases, so that they can keep them as souvenirs of their stay and studies in Dhofar, and brag about it when they go back home.

In the interview, Maryam and Raya reflect on the positive impact that Jibbali has had on their success in learning of English. It should be noted here that both participants have an excellent command of English and are very successful in their academic studies. Their names are included in the College of Arts and Applied Sciences Dean's Honour list. Both participants state that because they live their lives surrounded by multiple languages, they feel interested in and highly motivated to learn other languages, for example Modern Standard Arabic, and English. Specifically, Raya comments on the ease of learning English as her third language. She says, "after learning Jibbali, I started learning English, and it was a lot easier to learn English after learning Jibbali." Maryam states that because she was growing up surrounded by Jibbali, MSA and Dhofari Arabic, she was motivated to add English as her fourth language that she can use in her daily life. She adds that in general, she has become curious about other languages, such as Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish, and Sign Language. Maryam proudly identifies herself as a multilingual person; she considers it a special thing that distinguishes her from other people.

8. DISCUSSION

The results of this case study show that despite the fact that Jibbali occupies a prominent position in the lives of Dhofari multilingual speakers, it is not acknowledged as a language that can be used in the academic setting. The data show that Jibbali is primarily used as a language of communication between friends and family, and to signal intimacy and closeness among its speakers. Despite the fact that almost 50% of students in some schools of the Dhofar region are Jibbali speakers, Jibbali is rarely used for instructional purposes. According to the data obtained from the interview, Jibbali is used as a language of communication among teachers and students who speak Jibbali; however, the language of instruction is always perceived to be Arabic or English. Moreover, there are no classes or extracurricular activities where Jibbali language and culture are acknowledged and celebrated.

This case study has several implications. This is the first attempt, to the best of the authors' knowledge, to explore the status of the Jibbali language in the predominantly Arabic and English speaking educational settings in the Dhofar region. The first part of the paper shows that Dhofari speakers live their lives in multiple languages. The study also shows that unfortunately, the language of the minority is not taken into consideration

for pedagogical practices. The use of Jibbali is reserved for informal contexts only. As a result, many students are shy or reserved to use this language in a more formal setting of the school or university classroom. Our recommendation is to introduce classes, especially in the communities, where the speakers of the minority languages constitute the majority, that emphasize the importance of the Jibbali language and culture. For example, school curricula may integrate classes where students can use Jibbali in storytelling. These classes will also be beneficial for children who speak languages other than Jibbali, as students will have an opportunity to learn about the language and culture of their neighboring communities. These efforts can improve the attempts to reverse the course of language attrition among the Jibbali speakers and revitalize the language in the community. At the same time, it will also show to Jibbali speakers that their language should not be reserved only for home use in an informal setting. Jibbali can be used as the language of academic instruction.

At the university level, it is proposed that some courses should integrate Jibbali language and culture as well. For example, a university course, such as Field Methods can expose university students to Jibbali through the formal study of this language by collecting data, analyzing and describing the language. In addition, there should be more awareness among Jibbali speakers as to why some people can have accents when they speak Jibbali as their second language. Accents, grammatical errors, and code-switching should be accepted and not treated as a sign of disrespect. Overall, Jibbali speakers should change their perception of their language from the 'home' language reserved for communication with friends and family, to the language that can be used in different types of settings, including the formal setting of a school and university classroom.

9. CONCLUSION

This case study discusses one example of the linguistic diversity that is present in the Dhofar governorate of Oman. The statements made by linguists, sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists about the multilingual and diverse nature of many communities around the globe are illustrated by the rich LRs of the Dhofari students, who participated in this study. This case study has also shown the disparity between multiple languages that are used in actual communicative practices of the Dhofari students and the top-down language practices prescribed to them by the institutional and state policies. It is our belief that these policies should reflect the actual practices of people who live in multilingual communities. Following positive examples of many countries that include minority languages and cultures in the mainstream classroom, we argue for viewing diversity as a linguistic and cultural potential rather than an obstacle to the forming of the Omani identity. We believe that universities in Oman have an important role to play in raising awareness of the importance of including minority languages and cultures in educational settings. There is no evidence to suggest that the choice of only one language, be it MSA or English, in an instructional setting, can lead to the mastery of this language. The results of our case study have shown that to the contrary, multilingual speakers can have the efficiency and functionality of using their multiple languages in multiple contexts, and the insistence on one language only is not the mandatory prerequisite for a high proficiency in that language. Needless to say, more studies should be conducted in Oman to explore how minority languages can be brought into the classroom to enhance the educational experiences of the

Omani students. Ethnologue (Eberhard et al. 2023) mentions that Jibbali is an endangered language and the number of children who speak the languages is decreasing. One way to revitalize the language is to bring the language to the educational settings to the benefits of the language, its speakers and the broader community.

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