# Linguistic Identities in the Arab Gulf States

Waves of Change

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Implications for language policy and education

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## Implications for language policy and education

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The super-diverse Gulf states must contend with an evolving geopolitical and sociocultural landscape that places them at the centre of the competition between regional and global powers. Such competition can often influence government policies concerning language education (Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018). For instance, China and Russia have recently started to make inroads into what were previously areas of exclusively Western influence. This has begun to affect the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1990) in the Gulf states, perhaps only minimally for now, but changes are occurring. Such changes can be seen in the recent announcements by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that Chinese will be taught in schools alongside English (Al Arabiya, 2019; *The National*, 2019), as well as in the opening of Hebrew language schools in the UAE (*The National*, 2020). These developments can be said to form part of a growing realization among policymakers worldwide that becoming multilingual is both desirable and necessary for younger generations to survive in a globalized world (Calafato, 2020b; European Commission, 2018). Researchers, too, have begun to highlight the need for language teachers to adopt approaches that boost their students' awareness of the benefits of being multilingual (Makalela, 2015; Kirsch, 2020). Collectively termed multilingual pedagogy by researchers (Madiba, 2013; Otwinowska, 2017; Vaudrin-Charette & Fleuret, 2016), such approaches comprise activities and techniques (e.g., translanguaging) that develop students' metalinguistic knowledge and cross-linguistic awareness (Tang & Calafato, 2021), their multicompetence (Cook, 2016), their awareness of linguistic diversity (Calafato, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c), and their ability to interact in monolingual *and* multilingual contexts (García & Sylvan, 2011). This is a radical departure from the widely employed monolingual approach to teaching languages, where teachers and students conform to a monolingual native speaker ideal that views multilingualism as problematic (Calafato, 2019; Conteh, 2018).

In the Gulf states, there has traditionally been a strict, monolingual division between languages at educational institutions. English has dominated as a medium of instruction in private schools and universities, whereas Arabic has been the medium of instruction in public schools (Hopkyns, 2020; Kippels & Ridge, 2019). This division may have started to change

somewhat, although the country continues to face challenges in smoothly and effectively transitioning to a more holistic format for multilingual education that does not approach languages monolingually (Hopkyns, 2020). These challenges are not unique to the UAE. Multilingual educational initiatives are often implemented monolingually, where the opportunity to learn multiple languages is offered to students, yet each language is taught in isolation (Al-Bataineh & Gallagher, 2018). Such initiatives are also sometimes accompanied by a teacher-as-technician approach, which assumes that the success of any initiative can be achieved if teachers simply implement a specific methodology or curriculum (Connell, 2009). What is often ignored is that teachers might not have the desire or the training to effectively implement what is required of them (Schedel & Bonvin, 2017). These aspects of language teachers – that is, their ability and willingness to engage in specific teaching practices – have yet to be studied in relation to multilingualism in education in the super-diverse Gulf states. As Tudor (2003) observes, teachers are not simply 'teachers', and their pedagogical decisions might be influenced by more than just their teaching experiences, which requires a deeper exploration of who they are as individuals. Finally, the English language has received the bulk of attention from researchers investigating language education and multilingualism in the Gulf. Fewer studies have focused on other languages – for instance, Arabic (e.g. Calafato & Tang, 2019a; Tang & Calafato, 2021) – which has mostly been investigated as a first language among Emirati citizens (Hopkyns et al., 2021).

This chapter discusses the findings from an exploratory study that investigated what language teachers employed in private English-medium (EMI) secondary schools in the UAE thought about multilingualism as a pedagogical resource and the extent to which they implemented multilingual pedagogy with their students. The chapter concludes with recommendations for making the language teaching and learning process more effective so that teachers and students can fully realize their multilingual potential.

## Super-diversity and the UAE

The UAE is a super-diverse state that is home to hundreds of nationalities and languages. This multilingualism is due in part to the presence of large numbers of expatriate workers who comprise the majority of the UAE's population. English is the dominant language in the Gulf even though Arabic is the national language (Siemund et al., 2021). Other languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Persian, and Tagalog are widely spoken in the UAE (van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017), yet they do not enjoy the same status as English or the country's national language, much like in many countries worldwide (Kanna et al., 2020). In some instances, the dominance of English has affected the language attitudes and the level of multilingualism of the country's inhabitants. For example, Hopkyns (2014) reported that few UAE university students in her study listed proficiency in a language other than English (LOTE). Perhaps many of the participants felt that English alone was sufficient for them to

realize their goals. However, more recent studies on the UAE have found changes in the language attitudes of younger generations. Calafato and Tang (2019a, 2019b) discovered that, while English enjoyed a high status among secondary school students in Dubai, regardless of whether they were Emirati or expatriate, the students felt that the learning of multiple languages had become more widespread and that knowledge of only English was no longer enough. Many of the students also reported learning multiple languages themselves, although there was a clear hierarchy in terms of motivational intensity, with English being at the top. Studies on the UAE that have involved language teachers, expatriate or Emirati, are far fewer in number. They indicate that teachers, much like their students, possess varying levels of multilingualism and can assign different values to the languages they encounter in the country (Hopkyns, 2020). Overall, despite the UAE's multilingual nature (Hopkyns, 2021; Zoghbor, 2018), it is surprising that little research exists on whether language teachers have tried to harness this multilingualism as a pedagogical resource (for an exception, see Tang & Calafato, 2021).

Globally, comparatively more research has been done on language teachers' implementation of multilingual pedagogy, including how they draw (or do not draw) on their affordances in instances where they are multilingual (Calafato, 2019, 2021; Leonet et al., 2017). Such pedagogy has been found to boost students' awareness of linguistic diversity (Coelho et al., 2018), support their literacy skills (Rowe, 2018), aid their performance in language tests (Ng, 2018), and enhance their multilingual competence (Figueiredo, 2011). For language teachers in the UAE, implementing multilingual pedagogy can not only lead to a closer rapport with students (for an example of how this might be done, see Jiang et al., 2014), but it also reflects how daily interactions occur in a mix of languages and dialects in the country (Hopkyns, 2020; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017). In terms of language education policy, English has started to carry greater weight in public schools and universities than in the past (Hopkyns et al., 2018; Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018). In Abu Dhabi, for instance, English now serves as the medium of instruction alongside Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in public schools. Foreign languages, meanwhile, are generally not offered in public schools, which are mostly reserved for Emirati citizens, although there have been announcements regarding the introduction of Chinese and even French (*Gulf News*, 2018; *The National*, 2019). Private schools, in contrast, offer a wide selection of curricula from around the world (Calafato & Tang, 2019a, 2019b). MSA is taught as a compulsory subject in private schools to both expatriate (Arabic B) and Emirati students (Arabic A). This often results in many private school students learning English, MSA (as a first or second language), and an additional foreign language (Calafato & Tang, 2019b), usually French or Spanish. A limited number of EMI schools also offer students the chance to study community languages – for example, Urdu, Russian, and Greek. The chance to study community languages represents a break with the traditional practice of offering exclusively European languages and a move towards a more accurate representation

of the UAE's linguistic diversity in school language programs. UK and US curriculum schools are the most popular choices among both expatriate and Emirati families because of their international environment and educational offerings (Calafato & Tang, 2019a).

## Multilingualism and affordances theory

Multilingualism in this study is defined as an individual's knowledge and use of two or more languages in their daily lives (Bot, 2019). The study avoids maximalist definitions of multilingualism, where individuals must have a very advanced level of proficiency in two or more languages to be considered multilingual (for a discussion, see Cenoz, 2013). Most multilingual individuals can be described as having sequentially learned their languages in different contexts (e.g., at home, at school, etc.). One framework that has proved popular for conceptualizing the resources available to individuals as a result of being multilingual is the theory of affordances (Gibson, 1977). Affordances are defined as the various uses a person can draw from their environment. For example, a bookshelf can be used to store not only books but also clothes; it can be used as a makeshift bed or even as a box in which to grow plants. When applied to multilingual individuals, affordances theory posits that their multilingualism provides them with more options to interact with the environment due to their ability to draw on, among other things, a pool of discourse, pragmatic and morphosyntactic competences that are linked to multiple languages (Aronin, 2014). However, studies indicate that not all multilingual individuals are necessarily aware or appreciative of their affordances (e.g., Zheng, 2017), especially if they grew up in an environment where the native speaker ideal was dominant. Studies show that when multilingual language teachers are aware of their affordances, they draw on these to enhance their students' language learning experiences multilingually (Ng, 2018). Monolingual teachers, too, have been found to implement activities that harness their students' awareness of their multilingual affordances and help them learn more effectively (see Barros et al., 2020). Still, while several studies (e.g. Ljunggren, 2016) have focused on the affordances of multilingual learners, few have investigated the affordances of language teachers in any way, especially in the Gulf states.

## Research questions

To shed more light on the extent to which language teachers in the UAE, many of whom are multilingual, draw on their and their students' multilingualism at school, this study sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. How do the participants approach multilingualism as a resource in education?
2. To what extent do the participants implement multilingual pedagogy when teaching?

3.  Are there differences in the participants' implementation of multilingual pedagogy based on the languages they teach?

## Methods and instruments

### Participants

Ten language teachers from private UK curriculum secondary schools in the UAE participated in the study. The participants taught English, Arabic as a second (ASL) (Arabic B) and/or first language (AL) (Arabic A), or French as a foreign language (FFL). They were contacted via an email sent to their respective school administrations that explained the scope of the study and requested help with recruiting language teachers. The schools, which were all located in Dubai, were selected based on convenience. They had offered to help with previous projects, so it was easier to enlist their support than if schools were contacted randomly, especially given the COVID-19 situation. Table 11.1 provides some details regarding the participants' backgrounds, knowledge of additional languages to their L1s (Lx), languages taught (LT), and years of teaching experience (Exp). Pseudonyms were used for the participants to protect their anonymity.

UK curriculum schools were selected for the study due to several considerations in addition to convenience. UK curriculum schools, as already mentioned, are popular among both expatriate and Emirati students. In fact, many Emirati families prefer to send their children to UK curriculum schools because of the international learning environment that such schools represent. Public schools in the UAE, in contrast, are reserved for Emirati students, which has implications for the level of multilingualism encountered there among students and teachers and whether such an environment is reflective of UAE society, where *multiple* nationalities interact in a mix of languages (Hopkyns, 2021; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017).

*Table 11.1* Profiles of the teacher participants

| Teacher | LT | Country | Age | Exp | Lx |
|---------|------|--------------|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| Huda | ASL/AL | Jordan | 50 | 20 | English, French |
| Mona | ASL/AL | Egypt | 46 | 12 | English, French |
| Gamal | ASL | Egypt | 39 | 6 | English, French |
| Adam | English | South Africa | 42 | 15 | - |
| Tim | English | Canada | 35 | 7 | Arabic, Russian, Tagalog |
| Ahmed | English | Pakistan | 37 | 12 | Urdu |
| Samira | ASL | Jordan | 45 | 11 | English, French |
| Diana | FFL | Algeria | 39 | 10 | Arabic, English |
| Emna | FFL | Tunisia | 54 | 23 | Arabic, English |
| Sara | ASL/AL | Jordan | 42 | 12 | English |

### Data collection and analysis

The study, which was exploratory, used unstructured interviews to collect data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The aim was to encourage teachers to talk freely about their multilingualism and their experiences teaching languages. At the same time, some signposting was used during the interviews, with the study adopting an ecological approach (Tudor, 2003) to investigating the participants' multilingualism and how they drew on their and their students' knowledge of other languages during lessons. The study also drew on affordances theory (Aronin, 2014; Gibson, 1977) to probe the participants' practices and the extent to which they drew on their (if they were multilingual) and their students' multilingualism when teaching. The interviews were conducted online, with each interview lasting an average of 45 minutes. Following the interviews, contact was maintained with the participants via email to seek clarification regarding their interview responses and to ask additional questions. All the interviews were recorded (audio and video) and transcribed, following which the interview transcripts and email correspondences underwent hybrid inductive-deductive thematic analysis. The transcribed data were read multiple times to generate a set of initial codes, which derived principally from the readings but were also partly based on affordances theory (Aronin, 2014). These codes were checked with the email correspondences, refined where appropriate, and collated into categories and themes (for a more detailed example of inductive-deductive thematic analysis, see Xu & Zammit, 2020).

## Results

### The importance of becoming multilingual and the linguistic hierarchy

In discussing their teaching experiences, all participants touched on the multilingualism of their students and the cultural and linguistic diversity of UAE society. For instance, the Arabic teacher participants talked about how they came from countries where everyone mostly spoke Arabic to one where they regularly encountered people of different nationalities. Only Adam felt that the cultural and linguistic diversity he had witnessed in the UAE somewhat resembled the situation back in his home country of South Africa. However, there were specific differences in how each participant valued the multilingualism they saw in UAE society and their schools, and all the participants alluded to a clear linguistic hierarchy when discussing their experiences as language teachers in the UAE. In general, the participants felt that becoming multilingual was not only a positive development but also necessary for students in a country like the UAE. The Arabic teacher participants were especially warm to the idea of students becoming multilingual.

> Now, even in all the universities, it is good for students to learn lot of language, to speak lot of language, they have more choice, they have more

opportunities. We try to pass this to them but it's not every time they can understand this.

(Emna)

You need to add a new language to your language. What happens you cannot find someone who speaks your language?

(Gamal)

The role of parents figured prominently during the participants' discussion of the need to learn several languages, with the Arabic and French teacher participants expressing divergent opinions about what multilingualism meant to school parents. The Arabic teacher participants felt that many school parents, expatriates, and Emiratis did not consider Arabic to be an important subject, which affected some of their students' motivation to learn the language. The French teacher participants, in contrast, reported that many parents, regardless of nationality, were quite happy to see their children become multilingual.

The parents prefer if their kids can talk a lot of languages. They like the idea. Some parents think that it is very, very important.

(Diana)

Some parents not respect Arabic teachers because he only teach Arabic language but when they meet Science or Math teacher then they show more respect.

(Gamal)

In discussing this linguistic hierarchy, all the participants placed English at the top in terms of students' motivation to learn languages, followed by French and other languages, with Arabic at the bottom.

I think if we were to look at something like a hierarchy, Arabic as a teaching subject would be considered at the bottom of the academic hierarchy.

(Ahmed)

The Arabic teacher participants offered two additional reasons, besides a lack of interest among some school parents, for why Arabic was not considered as important as other subjects. First, they felt that the Arabic materials issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE) were too difficult for both expatriate and Emirati students, and they did not reflect how the students encountered Arabic in daily life. As a solution, four Arabic teacher participants (everyone except for Gamal) felt that the Arabic curriculum should integrate the teaching of Arabic dialects alongside MSA to increase students' motivation to learn Arabic.

> We can use local beside standard Arabic language. They must use this
> language because they are living here. We can use UAE dialect and Fusha
> (MSA) to show them the differences between.
>
> (Mona)

Second, as Gamal observed, some expatriate students planned to study or
work abroad in the future and felt that Arabic might be of little use once
they left the UAE. He said that he found it difficult to convince such students
to take Arabic seriously. All the Arabic teacher participants and even Tim,
who spoke fluent Arabic but did not teach it, felt that Arab and non-Arab
students should learn Arabic together, especially in primary school, because it
would motivate the students and be a more logical approach to teaching the
language.

> Why not put Arabic and non-Arab students in one class and not sep-
> arate them? It is not different between Arab and non-Arab. For Arabs
> and non-Arabs, when learn English, do we separate them? Then why do
> we separate them when learning Arabic? It is the same, language and
> language.
>
> (Huda)

Interestingly, while the English teacher participants felt that multilingualism
was important for their students, they reported making little effort to become
multilingual themselves. The only exception was Tim, who had learned
Russian and Tagalog in addition to Arabic. For example, both Adam and
Ahmed stated that they mostly knew English (Ahmed also knew Urdu), and
they had not tried to learn a new language over the years.

> People generally assume I am from Egypt and so they always start a con-
> versation in Arabic. And I am always apologizing because I can't speak
> the language. I have been spoilt in that, everywhere I go, people can speak
> English. So, it has never pushed me to learn any other language that is
> spoken.
>
> (Adam)

Adam noted that there was also little pressure from his school to speak Arabic,
with Ahmed confirming that the situation was much the same at his school.

> With the staff in the school who are not fluent in English, they are
> encouraged to speak English more than we are encouraged to speak
> Arabic.
>
> (Adam)

Tim, in contrast, was quite critical of English teachers who had not tried to
learn Arabic.

You've lived in a country for 10, 15, or 20 years and you still can't speak the native language? I don't want to hear excuses. So, they say, 'But everybody around me speaks English', No! Shame!

(Tim)

### Teaching practices in the multilingual classroom

Apart from Ahmed, all the participants implemented translanguaging and cross-linguistic awareness-raising activities to varying degrees during lessons, notably when teaching grammar.

I use English but little bit and sometimes I like to link in Arabic because there is some word from Arabic in French and from French in Arabic.

(Diana)

French grammar must pass a little bit by English because it is close to English. They need to know that it is a pronoun and after they need to understand infinitive and how it can come to do like present. Many things are similar in grammar like adjective, adverb.

(Emna)

Discussing why he drew on other languages during his lessons, Gamal stressed that he found it impossible to teach Arabic grammar using only Arabic, adding that it had not worked. Samira revealed that she used English to draw cross-linguistic comparisons between Arabic and English when teaching verb and noun placement despite her department head telling her to use only Arabic.

When he comes to visit me, I use English language. He says don't use. You are the teacher; you must use all the time Arabic. They ask us to stop using it but I use it, especially with the grammar. If any teacher do it, they will hide but, in high grades, it should be used.

(Samira)

In contrast, Sara and Huda preferred to limit their use of other languages in the classroom, especially English, arguing that students already used English in all their non-language subjects, so it was important not to let it encroach on their Arabic lessons. Meanwhile, Adam said that each language teacher implemented a hidden curriculum at his school. Discussing his hidden curriculum, he reported encouraging his students to mix languages in the classroom to help them express their thoughts, although he could not participate since he only knew English. He said that he understood the need to mix languages when learning a new language.

I feel that in order for them to learn, they must first learn in the languages they think in. So, if you think in Arabic but you are learning English it is

really important that you gauge in Arabic first what something means. It is very important how people process.

(Adam)

He reported pairing up students who were fluent Arabic-English and English-Urdu speakers with weaker multilingual students, explaining that it promoted greater peer learning in his class. He also encouraged his students to keep a multilingual dictionary on their desks during lessons. Ahmed, in contrast, felt that most students had a high enough level of English, so there was no reason to use other languages. For weaker students, he said that he helped them learn English through English. He discouraged the use of other languages during lessons, including when students tried to speak to him in Urdu or Hindi, languages that he knew well. He reasoned that his students were there to learn English.

Many students do try to speak in Urdu or Hindi but that, as a rule, I do not allow.

(Ahmed)

Tim had reservations about using multiple languages during lessons, saying that it would help those students who were motivated to learn, whereas those who, in his opinion, were lazy would take it as a cue to communicate only in Arabic.

### *Teacher collaboration across languages*

Three of the participants, Mona, Diana, and Tim, reported collaborating with their colleagues from other language departments at their schools. Diana said that she periodically worked with her English and Science teacher colleagues to link content in multiple languages and subjects.

We plan the same lesson and the kids see the lesson in different subjects. If it is like science vocabulary, like body parts, in French class, in this time he also learn in science class something related to body parts, and at the same time in English we try to link. We did this experience three times a year no more because they have more periods than me so I don't have enough time to follow them. So, we fix two weeks by term. These weeks, all the subjects must link.

(Diana)

For Mona, collaboration involved exchanging notes on students and class activities with an English teacher colleague, whom she had known for a long time. Tim reported teaching his English teacher colleagues a combination of MSA and Arabic dialects. He said that the school had agreed to host his initiative, which had him organizing weekly hour-long lessons on campus for the

English teachers. He said that he had organized similar lessons in schools in other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia where he had taught. He explained that the lessons had helped many teachers, who had told him that they could now better understand and communicate with their students. He remarked, however, that a similarly large number of teachers that he had taught had not been good students.

> They expect that it is supposed to be a lot easier. They weren't good students. They started and then quit. They didn't have that commitment. Even just one hour a week to learn Arabic.
>
> (Tim)

When asked about teaching English to Arabic teachers, he said that he had not thought about it, adding that it might have produced better results overall.

> I think the reverse would have been different. I think that would have been a nice initiative.
>
> (Tim)

Tim also stated that, while his school was supportive of his initiative, he felt that the school administration had not provided sufficient encouragement to the English teachers to attend. Ahmed and Adam, meanwhile, reported that there had been no real collaboration between different language departments at their schools.

> You would generally find that Arabic-speaking staff would sort of keep to themselves, English-speaking staff would keep to themselves. There are a few teachers who try to break those barriers but it is typically an Arabic-speaking staff who is learning English that would integrate with us.
>
> (Adam)

### Discussion

The study explored how the participants approached multilingualism as a resource in education, their implementation of multilingual pedagogy, and whether there were differences between the Arabic, English, and French teacher participants in this regard. The findings indicated that most of the participants were aware of the importance of being multilingual, much like the UAE secondary school students surveyed by Calafato and Tang (2019a, 2019b), and tried to implement multilingual pedagogy with their students. At the same time, despite their awareness of its importance, not all the participants (e.g., Ahmed and Adam) made an effort to become multilingual themselves. The use of English as a lingua franca appeared to have lowered their motivation to learn languages other than English, with parallels to the students in

the study by Hopkyns (2014). The linguistic hierarchy at school and the fact that the school administration did not encourage them to learn Arabic were likely also contributing factors. Moreover, while some participants observed that parents supported their children's learning of multiple languages, those teaching Arabic felt that it was not considered as important as other languages. The Arabic teacher participants suggested two changes that they thought would increase student motivation to learn Arabic: introducing dialects into the Arabic curriculum and using more relevant materials. Integrating dialects into MSA lessons is supported by several researchers (e.g., Al-Batal, 2018; Huntley, 2018), who have called for a move away from teaching only MSA so that learners can participate in a greater variety of authentic interactions that involve Arabic. Such a shift might present challenges for teachers – for instance, exposing learners to Arabic diglossia (and the potential confusion that might cause), selecting appropriate pedagogical materials, and choosing which dialects to teach and how to teach them since many dialects do not have a written form. However, there are several curricular models (e.g., Trentman, 2018) that schools and teachers could draw inspiration from when integrating dialects into MSA lessons.

The findings also indicated that the majority of the participants used multilingual pedagogy to varying extents when teaching and that this did not necessarily depend on *their* level of multilingualism and potential affordances. For example, Adam promoted translanguaging and multilingual peer learning among his students despite being mostly monolingual (and making little effort to become multilingual). Ahmed, in contrast, despite knowing English *and* Urdu/Hindi, used English exclusively even though there were many opportunities to draw on his and his students' multilingual affordances during lessons. The Arabic and French teacher participants, most of whom spoke three languages, were more uniform in their use of multilingual pedagogy, especially when teaching grammar, although some of the Arabic teacher participants also clearly wanted to devote more time to using Arabic during lessons. This appeared to be a reaction to what they saw as too much attention being given to English at school and in society, which is a view that has gained some traction in the UAE (see Siemund et al., 2021). In terms of specific practices, the participants reported using translanguaging, drawing on cross-linguistic comparisons regarding grammar, and bilingual dictionaries, with a minority collaborating with other language and non-language subject teachers. These activities represent critical components of multilingual pedagogy (Haukås, 2016) and are evidence of how the participants drew on their and their students' multilingual affordances to enhance their teaching in diverse ways.

Moreover, teacher collaboration in this study was not only aimed at boosting students' cross-linguistic awareness but also manifested as participants teaching languages to their colleagues. Indeed, Tim's efforts to teach his English teacher colleagues Arabic appeared to be a rare, albeit potentially very fruitful, initiative even if he reported that not all the

colleagues whom he taught had committed to learning Arabic. A more systematic initiative where teachers volunteer to teach each other languages and share ideas, either in tandem or group format (see Szyszka et al., 2018), could lead to them understanding their students' language learning experiences better and interacting with them on a deeper level. It would also create more opportunities for collaboration among teachers due to stronger collegial bonds and a deeper awareness of each other's subjects. Such an initiative could start with a focus on teaching English and Arabic, and then expand to cover other languages. Stronger support from schools and the MoE, which was not provided in Tim's case, would likely lead to more teachers staying committed. Finally, it is difficult to say that there were notable differences between the participants based on whether they taught Arabic, English, or French. The study was exploratory and consisted of a small sample of participants, which affects the generalizability of the findings. The teachers were also not observed while teaching, although the COVID-19 situation would have made conducting observations difficult. In any event, only Ahmed appeared to reject multilingual pedagogy in its entirety, whereas all the other participants used multilingual pedagogy to varying extents and recognized its benefits, even when their heads of department encouraged a more monolingual approach.

## Conclusion and implications for language education and policy

This study is one of the first to look at teachers of Arabic, English, and French in the UAE and the extent to which they implement multilingual pedagogy. In terms of language policy, the findings hold implications for private EMI schools, as well as public schools that have moved towards a more multilingual education format that places greater emphasis on English (e.g., in Abu Dhabi). Specifically, having English as the medium or principal language of instruction should be done with an eye to making sure that students are cognizant of the importance of interacting in both multilingual and monolingual contexts, as is done in daily life in many countries, including in the UAE. This means implementing certain measures at the curriculum and school levels to dissipate the linguistic hierarchies with which teachers and students have to contend. At the school level, one such measure would be to promote *systematic* collaboration between language teachers and those of other subjects. Such collaboration could be reinforced by raising awareness among teachers of the benefits of implementing multilingual pedagogy when teaching their students. It is also advisable for the MoE to take steps to make Arabic instruction more relevant and equitable. This means integrating an Arabic dialect or dialects into the Arabic curriculum, discontinuing separate Arabic streams for Arabs and non-Arabs, and assigning materials to teachers that more accurately reflect how Arabic is used in real-world interactions. Barring these measures, it is difficult to see how students, regardless of whether they are Emirati or expatriate, will be motivated to develop advanced proficiency in a

language that corresponds so little to the Arabic used outside of school, with strong implications for their multilingual competence. Finally, one hopes that this exploratory study will serve as an impetus for researchers to explore how language teachers navigate the multilingualism found in their classrooms in the super-diverse Gulf states in greater depth, especially as this concerns the teaching of languages other than English.

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