

## **Language Maintenance among the Indians of Yemen: A Sociolinguistic Study**

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**Abstract:** *This study aimed at investigating the factors that support the use of the Indian ethnic languages among the Indians of Yemen who live in the city of Aden. The theoretical framework of the current study was based on Fishman (1989) and Sridhar (1992). In order to achieve the objective of the study, the researchers posed three questions concerning the background of the Indians of Yemen, their proficiency in Arabic and the Indian Ethnic languages and the factors that have helped them maintain the Indian ethnic languages. A sample of 86 respondents was selected purposively. They responded to a three-section language questionnaire which was originally delivered to 100 participants. However, only 86 forms were filled out and returned. The language questionnaire was validated by a panel of experts in the fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. Results revealed that attitudinal, linguistic, social and political factors have helped them to maintain the Indian ethnic languages. Results also indicated that while they are skilled in listening and speaking their ethnic languages, they are not competent in reading and writing. In contrast, they have good command in Arabic four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing.*

### **1. Introduction**

The status of minority languages is a problem that has been created in macro-sociolinguistics due to group immigration. The field of language and ethnicity has recently climbed up the ladder of sociolinguistics. The works of Fishman (1966 and 1989), Kloss (1966), Weinreich (1974), Dorian (1983), Dweik (2000) Al-khatib (2001) and Dweik & Kittaneh (2011) are good examples. Indian ethnic groups are famous for their immigration all over the world; they leave their homeland to different destinations, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Arabian Peninsula, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia driven by political, religious and economic reasons.

The political causes are considered to be the major causes of the Indian immigration to Aden, especially from 1849 onwards. In this regard, Abdullah (2008) mentioned that the Indian influx to Aden resulted from the colonizing policy which attracted the Indians to work in the then new British colony of Aden. Accordingly, Aden opened its frontiers to the newcomers after the British colonization. In 1850, Aden was declared a free zone. The number of Indians markedly increased as a result of annexing Aden to India. Consequently, Indian merchants ran the trade; Indian rupees were the standard currency and Indian words and customs laid a veneer of Indian culture on the Arab world there.

Amshoush (2003), who quoted some French travelers, indicated that some Muslim Indians passed through Aden while they were on their way to Mecca to perform religious duties. They found it an excellent place for them to live in and to build up their wealth by trading there. Also, Indians were attracted to Aden due to its location on the route from India to the Arabian Peninsula and vice versa. The political, economic and religious causes that triggered the Indian immigration generated other social causes when the Indian immigrants found a better life in the then new colony, and decided to settle down. Therefore, other Indian families followed their paterfamilias to live together.

According to Taha (1969), the 1963 census conducted by the British government, showed that there were 10,000 Indians in Aden. The Indians organized themselves on the basis of regional and religious affiliations. They came from different parts of India which included different religious backgrounds such as Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. Abdullah (2008: 34) pointed out that “the vast majority of the Indians of Yemen converted to Islam while the others left the country. Due to the absence of any official census, the approximate number of the Muslims was about 10,000.” Currently, most of the Indians of Yemen live in several mixed quarters in Aden such as (Alkhusa:f), حي حسين (husayn square), القطيع (Alqati:ع) and ي الهنود (Alhunu:d square); (See Appendix D for transliteration). Nevertheless, some other parts of Yemen such as Sana'a, Tai'z and Al-Hudaida have received a considerable number of Indians during the twentieth century. The first two generations of the Indian immigrants to Aden were composed of a mixture of literate and illiterate individuals. Whereas the former were civil servants, clerks and military, the latter were artisans and workers. The Indians currently enjoy a high level of education. This is due to the compulsory and free educational system in the Republic of Yemen. Their children can attend public and private schools, colleges and universities.

To sum up, the Indians of Yemen are now considered the fourth generation as the first generation came to Aden with the British forces in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the second came during the 1920s, and third generation followed them after the 1950s.

The Indians of today are well educated and fill all kinds of posts in public and private sectors. Some of them run their own trade; they have contacts with Indian markets via importing and selling different kinds of Indian products, such as Indian spices, perfumes and incense in Aden. It is reported that a large number of Indians occupy administrative posts in banks, firms, educational institutions. Indian doctors, teachers, professors, lawyers, engineers and accountants can be found in both public and private institutions. Due to the increasing numbers of the Indian immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several Indian institutions, namely, schools, social and sports clubs, places of worship and restaurants were built in order to serve the Indian community in Aden.

The Indians of Aden were aware of the multicultural atmosphere in Aden. Thus, they constructed their own schools in order to preserve their Indian identity and culture such as the Gujarati School, Anjaman Islam School, Bahi Lalyi Islamic School and Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS). Regarding social and sports clubs, Abdullah (2008) reported that several Indian clubs and associations were founded in the 1930s such as the Indian youth sports club, the Islamic Indian Association, Anjman **Islah** Club which was established in Al-Tawahi city and had a key role in the Islamic Indian Association and the Blue Star Sports Club. Religion was very important to the first Indian generations. They did not lag in constructing their places of worship. Several religious foundations and facilities were built in different places of Aden. For example, different sources reported that the Sunni Muslim Indians built several mosques to practise their religious rites. The Shiite sect built their own mosque which is called 'Shiite mosque', the Buhra sect built 'Al-Buhra Al-Ismaylia Mosque'.

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

The existence of two languages, such as the host language and the immigrant language, may influence the status of each language whereby the powerful language may dominate and the other language may be replaced. The status of immigrant languages is a problem that has been dealt with extensively in sociolinguistics. It is a controversial issue because some scholars i.e. Fishman (1989) believes that "what begins as the language of social and economic mobility ends, within three generations or so, as the language of the crib as well, even in democratic and pluralism-permitting contexts"(p. 206). Other scholars, like Elkholy (1966), Dweik (1992) believe that the second generation of the immigrant community forgets the mother tongue under the pressure of the powerful dominant language. In contrast to these views, Sridhar (1992) claimed that "speakers of Indian languages tend to maintain their languages over generations and countries, even when they live away from the region where it is spoken" (pp. 56-7). Thus, the researchers decided to investigate the status of the Indian languages in Aden, Yemen to shed light on small immigrant groups who have not been given enough attention and to determine the status of their ethnic languages when they are in contact with Arabic as a host and official language in Yemen.

### **1.2. Objectives of the study**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the factors that support the Indian language maintenance among the Indians of Yemen. It also aimed to explore the language background and the level of proficiency in the four language skills in Arabic and in the the Indian ethnic languages and to show if the results of the study have any implications for further research, especially among small and large ethnic languages in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere in the world.

### **1.3 Questions of the study**

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the researchers attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the language background of the Indians of Yemen?
2. How proficient are the Indians of Yemen in each language?
3. What factors have helped the Indians of Yemen to maintain or lose the Indian ethnic language(s)?

### **1.4. Hypotheses of the study**

1. The researchers hypothesize that the Indians' proficiency in the Indian four language skills are not as good as their proficiency in the Arabic four language skills;
2. The researchers hypothesize that the Indian community in Aden is multilingual where many languages are used for different purposes.
3. The researchers hypothesize that the Indians of Yemen who dwell in the city of Aden have preserved their ethnic languages to a certain extent driven by linguistic, attitudinal social and political reasons.

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

The significance of the study stems from the fact that the chosen population is rarely investigated. Researchers usually pay more attention to the status of large ethnic languages such as Polish, Italian, Spanish and German in the USA and Canada. Small ethnic languages have recently gained interest, especially in Australia, New Zealand and parts of Asia and Africa. However, the status of ethnic languages in Yemen is almost non-existent. The findings of this study may suggest some additional factors that might be considered when dealing with the status of other similar small ethnic languages not only in Yemen, but also in the world at large. This study documents some aspects of the community life that affect generations as well as their language behavior. It is significant because the community under investigation has a diversity of languages that are used by its members rather than one single language. Thus, it is important to clarify whether these small languages resist the mainstream language. Moreover, the current study is significant as it highlights the language behavior of the fourth generation of the Indians of Yemen. Last but not least, the current study may benefit scholars, educators, as well as members of the selected community.

### **1.6. Limitations of the study**

Due to the small size of the sample used in this research, the findings may suggest some generalizations that can be applicable to other small communities. The findings are limited to the Indians of Aden and the time, sample, and instruments used in the investigation. The current study was conducted in Aden – Yemen in the month of January, 2011. The researchers used two instruments, namely, a societal community profile and a linguistic questionnaire.

## **2. Review of literature**

In this section, the researchers intend to review some theoretical and empirical literature which has an impact on the outcome of languages in contact and to see if the findings of this study have any implications for future research.

Fishman (1966) set forth the outline of language maintenance and shift as a field of inquiry by relating the language situation to extra-linguistic factors such as societal, cultural and psychological factors when different populations have contact with one another. Accordingly, he briefly suggested and discussed three major topical subdivisions of this field:

1. The habitual use of language at more than one point in time or space under conditions of intergroup contact.
2. The antecedent, concurrent or consequent psychological, social and cultural processes and their relationship to stability or change in habitual language use.
3. The behavior toward language in the contact setting, including directed maintenance or shift efforts. (p.424)

Sridhar (1985) studied the phenomenon of language maintenance and language shift among the Asian Indian speakers of Kannada in New York within the first generation of settlers in the United States. Data were collected from a sample of twenty-one Indian families. The researcher established a community profile to the community under treatment to collect historical and sociological data. Besides, he distributed a fifty-five-item questionnaire to obtain data about language proficiency, domains of language use and attitudes towards the ethnic language. The study showed that the Asian Indian speakers of Kannada maintained their ethnic language.

Dweik (1992), who investigated the language situation among the Christian Lebanese in Buffalo, New York, reported that the second generation of the community has lost Arabic as a mother tongue and adopted English, the host language, in every domain of life. He cited the following reasons for shifting to English and losing Arabic:

1. The dispersal of the Lebanese community all over the city and suburbs had weakened the social ties among members in the community and encouraged mixed marriages which meant less reliance on Arabic.
2. The similarity between the Lebanese and American cultures which were based on common religious grounds had something to do with their assimilation to American life and shifting to English.

Holmes et al. (1993) investigated the language situation among three ethnic groups in New Zealand which were the Tongan, Greek, and Chinese communities. They listed the factors that fostered language maintenance as follows: (1) Regular social interaction between community members, (2) use of the mother tongue in the home, (3) positive attitudes towards the language and high values placed on it to maintain ethnic identity, (4) residential closeness, (5) resistance to mixed marriage, (6) support for community language schools, (7) religious organizations and (8) a positive orientation to the homeland.

Downes (1998) elaborated on several factors that enhance language maintenance and shift. He stated that "A wide range of domains means that a wide a variety of areas of life can be led in that language."(p.62). Also, he asserted that "maintenance is favored if the ethno-cultural group values its language as the vehicle of a highly prized culture or way of life."(p.64) Regarding language shift, he stated that in situations of unstable bilingualism, immigrant languages can become the mother tongues of shrinking speech communities. He also mentioned a variety of ways in which a language could disappear and explained that a language could die in cases of genocide, or if the language was repressed by the political power in the country.

Spolsky (1998) elaborated on the political aspects of language use, maintaining that language choice depends on political power. He also explained that some political systems can attempt to control its minority groups by banning their ethnic languages such as Turkey which bans the use of the Kurdish, or by encouraging the ethnic languages as the case of Canada and the Baltic States.

Dweik (2000) explored the ways in which the Chechen language and culture were preserved in Jordan. He pointed out that the Jordanian language policy is based on tolerance and the Jordanian political system supports the use of ethnic languages along with the use of Arabic which is the official language of the country. He also showed that the social and cultural isolation, fostered by the formation of social and cultural islands, had contributed to the maintenance of the Chechen language and culture.

Al-Khatib (2001) investigated the Armenian community in Jordan and the socio-demographic factors that enhanced language shift from their ethnic group (i.e. Armenian) to the mainstream language which is Arabic. Data were collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. He used the snowball sample consisting of 110 respondents. He concluded that the Armenian community was experiencing a gradual shift towards Arabic that might lead to language loss. He cited that the Armenians have shifted to using Arabic in most social domains and that the use of the Armenian language was restricted to the elderly.

Clyne (2001) elaborated on the importance of home in language maintenance, especially grandparents, pointing out that "grandparents rather than parents play an increasing role in the intergenerational language maintenance."(p.367)

In a different part of the world, Hatoss & Sheely (2009) examined the Sudanese community in South-East Queensland in Australia. The study aimed to explore attitudes, perceptions and the actual use of the mother tongue (Dinka) in a refugee context among adolescent and young adult secondary school learners from the Sudanese community. Sixty-seven Sudanese students served as subjects for the study. They responded to an open-ended questionnaire. The researchers concluded that the Sudanese refugee community in Australia was strongly attached to the mother tongue (Dinka) but due to pragmatic reasons,

other languages were replacing the mother tongue in various private and public domains.

### **3. Methodology**

The researchers used a combined qualitative and quantitative research design. A purposively-selected sample of 86 Indian-Yemenites was asked to respond to a language questionnaire. The researchers used the 'social network' model proposed by Milroy and Milroy (1978) and approached the subjects through a third party, as a friend of a friend who has access to the community. Two assistants who belonged to the community helped the researchers to distribute and collect the language questionnaire. They distributed the questionnaire among their friends, people who work with them, and among some of their neighbours. The selected sample covered important demographic variables, namely, gender, age, educational background, occupation, marital status, origin of spouse and type of school respondents attended. (See Appendix A)

#### **3.1. Instruments of the study**

To accomplish the objectives set for this study, the researchers used the community profile technique suggested by Wolck (1972) and others. The community profile included sociological and historical data about the community. The researchers obtained the data from literature available at the University of Aden libraries. Besides, the researchers looked thoroughly for any relevant information online. Data were also obtained from a pilot questionnaire that was delivered to 12 members of the community. They served as assistants who belong to the community in question. (See Appendix (B) for the pilot questionnaire). The pilot questionnaire included twenty-two open-ended questions. The questions covered different aspects of the historical and social background of the Indian community such as the languages they speak, the regional origins their ancestors came from, causes and patterns of immigration, their residential, educational, occupational distributions and institutions of the community. It also contained demographic data about the respondents themselves such as gender, age, education, occupation, marital status, place of birth, their regional origin in India and the time their ancestors came to Aden.

The data collected from the community profile helped the researchers design and deliver the language questionnaire after its validity and reliability had been achieved. Three assistants handed in and collected the copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. Bickerton (1971) suggested that seeking assistance from in-group people who have easy access is fruitful in overcoming problems that the researchers may encounter. For instance, some members of the selected community may refuse to respond to the questionnaire because they are afraid of giving personal information to strangers. Thus, he argued for the importance of using assistants from the speech community in question because they constitute part of it.

### **3.2. The language questionnaire**

After receiving the responses of the pilot questionnaire, the researchers prepared and designed the sociolinguistic main questionnaire. The researchers made use of the previous literature and related studies such as those of Fishman (1966), Dweik (2000), Al-Khatib (2001), Al-Nahar (2009) and Dweik and Kittaneh (2011). They adapted and modified them to suit the community under investigation. The questionnaire was validated and tested before it was administered to a sample of respondents from the Indian community in Aden. Relying on the information received from the pilot study, the language questionnaire was not written in any of the Indian ethnic languages because the pilot questionnaire revealed that the Indians were not proficient enough to read and write in Indian languages. Therefore, the language questionnaire was written in Arabic and English, and the respondents were allowed to choose the language of their choice to fill up the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections in addition to a cover letter that explained the purpose of the questionnaire and how to fill it up. The first section of the questionnaire started with a demographic data which described the social background of the participants. (See Appendix C). The second section of the questionnaire aimed to find out the linguistic background of the respondents and their parents. It comprised six open ended questions each of which reflected the native language of the respondents and their parents as well as the language they speak other than Arabic. The third section of the questionnaire aimed at finding out the respondents' proficiency in Arabic and the Indian ethnic languages. This section included eight items which focused on various aspects of proficiency in language skills, i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing. The respondents' task was to evaluate their proficiency in each language skill. Four options were given and the respondents were asked to check the suitable answer as follows: Very good, Good, Accepted, Weak.

The fourth section of the questionnaire aimed at finding out the factors that supported the use of the Indian ethnic languages. This section included fifteen statements which focused on the factors that were responsible for using the respondents' Indian ethnic language(s) such as having two Indian parents, the family and the home etc. Each statement was followed by three options: Agree, Neutral and Disagree.

### **3.3. Validity of the questionnaire**

Having written the questionnaire, a panel of six professional jurors who are experts in the field of sociolinguistics was requested to comment on the suitability of the form and content of the questionnaire. The jurors suggested and recommended different modifications that made the questionnaire items clearer and more informative. For example, one of the professors suggested deleting few items and adding others.



#### **4. Findings of the study**

The study sought to answer three questions related to the language background of the respondents, language proficiency in Arabic and the Indian ethnic languages and the Factors that support the survival of the Indian languages.

The findings presented in Table 1 below revealed a diversity of languages are being used by them. These languages include Arabic which is the official host language of Yemen. Other languages include Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi, Malayalam, English and French. These languages reflect the multilingual background of the community which is an indication of the tolerant language policy adopted by decision makers in Yemen. This policy allowed the learning and using of many languages. This is confirmed in the results reported in table 1 below which showed that 40 respondents claimed Arabic as their native language, 21 Hindi, 21 Urdu and four claimed other Indian languages such as Marathi, Gujarati and Malayalam. It is significant to point out that the respondents who are actually a fourth generation of Indians still claim Indian ethnic languages as their native ones. When the respondents were asked about their fathers' native languages, 66 respondents indicated the Indian ethnic languages, whereas 20 indicated Arabic. Moreover, when asked about their mothers' native languages, 67 chose the Indian ethnic languages and 19 chose Arabic.

Likewise, regarding the languages the respondents and their parents speak other than Arabic, English was rated number one by 72 respondents. This can be explained by the fact that those respondents are literate and educated and perhaps have jobs that require them to be skilled in English. They also reported that 44 speak Hindi, 38 Urdu and 4 other languages such as Gujarati, Malayalam and French. Moreover, when the respondents were asked about the languages their mothers speak, 44 reported that their mothers speak Hindi, 34 Urdu, 20 English and 12 other languages such as Gujarati and French.

Results reported in Table 2 above indicated that the majority of the respondents understand and speak their ethnic languages well. However, when considering their reading and writing proficiency in the ethnic languages, their proficiency was markedly low. In fact, 70% of them answered "very good" when asked to rate their abilities in comprehending the Indian ethnic languages, and 58% answered "very good" when asked to rate their ability in speaking the Indian ethnic languages. Additionally, 27% reported "very good" in reading the Indian ethnic languages and 21% in writing such languages. On the other hand, 47% of the respondents answered "poor" when asked to rate their ability in writing the Indian ethnic languages, 37% in reading, 9% in speaking and 2% in comprehending the Indian ethnic languages. The low percentages in reading and writing could be explained in terms of the oral use of the Indian ethnic languages.

Table 1: Language background of the respondents and their parents

<b>Question</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>Hindi</b>	<b>Urdu</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Respondents' native language	40	21	21	4	86
2. Native language of respondents' fathers	20	30	32	4	86
3. Native language of respondents' mothers	19	36	25	6	86
<b>Question</b>	<b>Hindi</b>	<b>Urdu</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Other</b>	
4. Languages the respondents speak other than Arabic	46	22	70	16	
5. Language the respondents' fathers speak other than Arabic.	44	38	72	4	
6. Languages the respondents' mothers speak other than Arabic.	44	34	20	12	

Table 2: Language proficiency in respondents' Indian ethnic languages

<b>Language skill</b>	<b>V. good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Understanding what you listen to	70	19	9	2	100
Speaking	58	23	10	9	100
Understanding what you read	27	23	13	37	100
Writing	21	21	11	47	100

Results reported in Table 3 below indicated that the overwhelming majority of respondents showed a very good command in Arabic. When they were asked to rate their ability in Arabic, a high percentage, 97% indicated high proficiency in understanding, 95% in speaking, 92% in reading, and 92% in writing Arabic. On the other side of the coin, a very scanty number of respondents indicated low proficiency in the language skills. In fact, 3% answered "poor" when asked to rate their ability in writing; 3% in reading and 2% in speaking Arabic.

Table 3: Language proficiency in Arabic

Language skill	V. good %	Good %	Total	Accepted %	Poor %	Total %
Understanding what you listen to	83	14	97	3	0	100
Speaking	91	3	95	3	2	100
Understanding what you read	85	7	92	5	3	100
Writing	70	22	92	5	3	100

Results reported in Table 4 below showed that the vast majority of the respondents agreed about the vital role of the family and the home in enhancing the use of the Indian ethnic languages. They also reported that watching Indian TV programs helped them maintain the Indian ethnic languages. In fact, 93% of the respondents agreed that watching Indian TV programs helped them to use the Indian ethnic languages. Similarly, having grandparents during childhood played a significant role in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages. This is clear since 91% of the respondents agreed with that and 9% remained neutral. Similarly, 91% of them reported that living in an Indian community in Aden helped them to use the Indian ethnic languages. Results also showed that 88% of the respondents believe that the tight relations among the Indians of Yemen helped them to preserve their ethnic languages. Likewise, 88% were proud of the Indian identity which highly supported the use of the Indian ethnic languages. Again, results showed that 86% of the respondents agreed that the relaxed linguistic climate in Yemen helped them to maintain the Indian ethnic languages while 2% disagreed. Results also showed that having two Indian parents played a crucial role in maintaining the respondents' Indian ethnic languages. This is clear since 86% of the respondents agreed with the statement, whereas 2% disagreed. Results also showed that 81% of the respondents agreed that the internal marriages among the Indians helped them to maintain the Indian ethnic languages. Similarly, 81% agreed that the Indian languages during the British colonization played a role in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages. Regarding the role of visiting relatives in India in language maintenance, a high percentage, 60%, agreed and 30% were neutral, whereas 10% disagreed. In addition, when they were asked about the role of Indian community leaders in language maintenance, 58% agreed and 30% were neutral but 12% disagreed. Forty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that the Indian social clubs in Aden helped them maintain the Indian ethnic languages. Forty-two of them reported that Indian schools in Aden played a role in maintaining the Indian ethnic

languages. Similarly, 40% agreed that the place of worship in Aden had a role in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages.

Table 4: Factors that supported the use of the respondents' Indian ethnic languages

<b>Factors that supported the use of respondents' Indian ethnic languages</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Neutral %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1. My family and the home played an important role in preserving my Indian ethnic language.	93	5	2	100
2. Watching Indian TV programs helped the Indians maintain the Indian ethnic languages.	93	7	0	100
3. Having my grandparents when I was a child helped me to maintain my Indian ethnic language.	91	9	0	100
4. Living in an Indian community in Aden helped the Indians maintain the Indian ethnic languages.	91	7	2	100
5. The tight relations among the Indians of Yemen helped them preserve their languages.	88	9	3	100
6. The pride in my Indian identity had a role in maintaining my Indian ethnic language.	88	9	3	100
7. The relaxed linguistic climate in Yemen helped the Indian ethnic groups maintain the Indian languages.	86	7	7	100
8. Having two Indian parents helped me to maintain my Indian ethnic language.	86	12	2	100
9. Internal marriages with Indians helped me maintain my Indian ethnic language.	81	16	3	100
10. Using the Indian languages during the British colonization helped the Indians in Aden maintain the Indian ethnic languages.	81	14	5	100

11. Visiting relatives in India helped me maintain my Indian ethnic language.	60	30	10	100
12. Indian community leaders played a vital role in maintaining our Indian ethnic language.	58	30	12	100
13. The Indian social clubs in Aden had a role in maintaining the Indian languages.	49	30	21	100
14. The Indian schools in Aden had a role in maintaining the Indian languages.	42	33	25	100
15. The place of worship in Aden had a role in preserving the Indian languages.	40	23	37	100

### 5.1. Discussion

Results reported in Table 1 concerning language background showed that the Indian community in Aden is a multilingual community and the Indian ethnic languages are still alive. This is clear as a large number of the Indians of Yemen, including the respondents and their parents, have been speaking the Indian ethnic languages since their childhood and consider these languages the native tongues. In addition, a considerable number of them speak more than one language. For instance, they speak the mainstream language (Arabic), the immigrant language i.e. the Indian ethnic language and English as well as other languages like French.

Results reported in Table 2 concerning language proficiency showed that the Indians of Yemen possess a high proficiency in the speaking and listening skills in the Indian ethnic languages. However, some of them are not proficient in reading and writing. This result can be explained in light of the fact that they did not learn their ethnic languages at school. Instead, they acquired them during the childhood at home.

Results reported in Table 3 concerning language proficiency in the Arabic four language skills indicated that the vast majority of the Indians of Yemen are highly proficient as reflected in the figures 97%, 94%, 92% and 92%. However, a small number of them showed poor proficiency in reading and writing Arabic. Those who reported little knowledge in reading and writing Arabic might be the elderly people who were educated in their homeland or the people who obtained low education level and worked in professions that did not require reading or writing skills.

Results reported in Table 4 showed that many factors were involved in the survival of the Indian ethnic languages. These factors could be categorized under the following:

### **A. Linguistic and attitudinal factors**

The habitual use of the Indian ethnic languages, especially at home with family members i.e. parents and grandparents, fostered by the positive attitudes towards these languages, have helped these languages to survive. The fact that the Indians of Yemen use the Indian ethnic languages habitually in the home with parents, grandparents and relatives and when watching TV programmes and in different social settings have also helped them to retain the language. As a result, these languages are perceived to be the languages spoken with the members of the Indian community. This result is very similar to the findings of Fishman (1966) who suggested that the habitual use of language at more than one point in time or space under conditions of intergroup contact is a sign of language maintenance.

### **B. Social and cultural factors**

The family and home played a key role in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages. Having their grandparents during the childhood affected the survival of the Indian ethnic languages. This result is identical to Holmes et al. (1993) and Dweik & Kittaneh (2011). It is also comparable to the findings of Clyne (2001) who pointed out that “grandparents rather than parents play an increasing role in the intergenerational language maintenance.”(p.367)

Although most of the Indians of Yemen live in Arab and mixed communities, some of them live in Indian ones. This is clear when 91% agreed that living in Indian community in Aden helped them maintain the Indian ethnic languages. This result is in line with Holmes et al. (1993) who noted that residential closeness is significant for language maintenance.

Furthermore, the tight relations among the Indians of Yemen, fostered by internal marriages, helped the Indian ethnic languages to survive. Members of the Indian community not only enjoyed strong familial ties with relatives in Yemen, but also they kept close contact with their relatives in India. Some of the Indians of Yemen had positive orientations to their homeland. Therefore, they paid visits to their relatives in India. Those who have not indicated such visits to India might be those whose ancestors came through the first wave of comers to Yemen and brought their families with them to live in Yemen. This result is in line with the findings of Dweik (2000) who emphasized that the internal marriage system among the Chechens of Jordan gave the advantage of retaining their mother tongue.

The role of the Indian community leaders is to some extent vital in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages. Several cultural and social meetings are held throughout the year Indian such as the Independence Day of India and the *Diwali* (the festival of lights). It is worth mentioning here that the place of worship had a role in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages. Some Indian subgroups (e.g. Al-Buhra) had their own mosques where community leaders like the *imam* (celebrant) held lectures and cultural meetings. Moreover, members of this subgroup communicated and interacted by using the Indian ethnic languages inside Al-Buhra mosque. This result is comparable to the findings of Fishman

(1966) who indicated that “the antecedent, concurrent or consequent psychological, social and cultural processes” (p. 424) had a key role in maintaining an ethnic language.

It is worthy to point out the diminishing role of the Indian social clubs, the Indian private schools and the place of worship, as reflected by the figures of 49%, 42% and 40%, is an indication that the Indians of Yemen are witnessing a kind of assimilation in the mainstream Yemenite life. This result is comparable to Kloss (1966), Holmes et al. (1993) and Dweik (2000) who highlighted the role of parochial schools in language preservation.

### **C. Political and other factors**

When discussing the political factors that enhanced the use of the Indian ethnic languages among the Indians of Yemen, light is shed on two major factors, namely, the government policy adopted during the British colonization and the current political climate in the host country.

The Indians of Yemen pointed out that the Indian ethnic languages were used widely during the British colonization. The British government allowed them to open their own schools and cultural institutions. The Indian ethnic languages were used either formally or informally in celebrations, festivals and cultural activities. Thus, they had felt free to use their ethnic languages in all domains of language use and consequently they maintained these languages. This result is very similar to Kloss (1966) who suggested that the former use of an ethnic language helped in maintaining this language.

Concerning the political climate in Yemen, it was clear that the Yemenite governments fostered the educational and cultural institutions of ethnic minorities. The Indians of Yemen were not prevented from using the Indian ethnic languages. According to them, the relaxed linguistic climate in Yemen helped them maintain the Indian ethnic languages. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi International School is still open for people to attend and take part in different social and cultural activities under the umbrella of the official authorization. This result is comparable to the findings of Kloss (1966) who highlighted the importance of the state in creating policies towards immigrant languages. These policies can (1) promote, (2) accommodate, (3) tolerate, and (4) suppress them. The Indian ethnic languages in Yemen are not suppressed by decision makers as the cases in Turkey, Syria, and Morocco. In Yemen, language was not used as an exercise of political power which means that decision makers did not attempt to control its minority groups by banning their languages as Turkey banned the use of Kurdish. This is similar to Kloss' assertion that the immigrant language minorities in the USA existed in a climate of toleration-oriented rights in which they were left to their own devices and energies to maintain their native language. This also confirms the previously reviewed literature of Downes (1998), Spolsky (1998) and Dweik (2000).

Furthermore, the brotherly relations among the Yemenites of all origins and colours have enhanced the feeling of satisfaction and being proud of their ethnic identity. Such practices within the Yemenite home have helped the

Indians of Yemen to develop a positive attitude towards their ethnic identity and, in turn, have helped them maintain their ethnic languages.

## **5.2. Conclusions**

1. The findings of the study showed that the hypotheses raised by the researchers are significantly applicable to the problem raised in this study:
2. The Indian community of Yemen is multilingual embracing several languages such as their Indian ethnic languages, Arabic, English and French.
3. The majority of the Indians of Yemen are highly proficient in the Arabic four language skills. Despite the fact that they lack proficiency in reading and writing the Indian ethnic languages, the Indians of Yemen are proficient in the listening and speaking skills in the Indian ethnic languages.
4. The Indians of Yemen possess positive attitudes towards their Indian ethnic languages and towards Arabic. They perceive the ethnic language to be a source of pride.
5. Regarding the factors that support the habitual use of the Indian ethnic languages, results revealed several factors, among which are the following:
  - The family and home: the Indian ethnic languages have been used at home with almost all family members, having two Indian parents, having grandparents during the childhood; the tight relations among the Indians either in Yemen or in India and internal marriages are all significant in maintaining the Indian ethnic languages.
  - Positive orientation to the homeland, embodied by visiting relatives in India, and attitudes towards their Indian identities, illustrated in the pride towards their Indian identity and roots have enhanced language maintenance.
  - The formal use of the Indian ethnic languages during the British colonization has helped the Indian community maintain their ethnic languages.
  - The democratic climate in Yemen has also helped the Indian community maintain their ethnic languages. The Yemenite government and its educational policies have allowed minority groups to use and learn their languages freely without restrictions. Also, the brotherly relations among the people of Yemen from all roots as well as equality in treatment have enhanced the development of positive attitudes towards ethnic groups.

## **5.3. Recommendations for future research**

Due to the fact that the current study has dealt with the Indian community in Aden, further research on the Indian communities in different parts of Yemen is recommended. Also, further research can be conducted on the Indian communities in the Arabian Peninsula, Asia as well as other parts of the world and on other ethnic groups such as the Persians, the Somalis and the Jews of Yemen. The researchers also recommend performing comparative studies on



large aboriginal ethnic languages that have been in contact with Arabic, such as the Chaldo-Assyrian in Iraq and the Berber in Morocco, Algeria and Libya.

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## Appendix (A)

## Demographic characteristics of the selected sample

Age	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
(20 – 29)	12	8	20
(30 – 39)	13	12	25
(40 – 49)	9	10	19
(50 – 59)	6	10	16
60 and above	4	2	6
Total	44	42	86
<b>Place of birth</b>			
Yemen	39	40	79
India	3	1	4
Other	2	1	3
Total	44	42	86
<b>Education</b>			
Secondary school or less	14	10	24
Diploma	9	12	21
BA	15	18	33
Other	6	2	8
Total	44	42	86
<b>Occupation</b>			
Student	3	8	11
Business	16	6	22
Education	9	5	14
Handicraft field	6	0	6
Civil service	7	10	17
Medical field	1	3	4
No Occupation	2	10	12
Total	44	42	86
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	<b>10</b>	14	24
Engaged	<b>1</b>	0	1
Married	<b>32</b>	25	57
Other	<b>1</b>	3	4
Total	44	42	86
<b>Origin of spouse</b>			
Arab	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	25
Indian	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	34
Other	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	3

Unmarried	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	24
Total	44	42	86
<b>Type of school respondents attend</b>			
Public Arabic schools	37	40	77
Private Arabic schools	3	0	3
Indian schools	1	1	2
Religious schools	0	0	0
International schools	3	1	4
Total	44	42	86
<b>Residence</b>			
Indian neighbourhood	4	8	12
Arabian neighbourhood	20	5	25
Mixed neighbourhood	19	29	48
No response	1	0	1
Total	44	42	86

**Appendix (B)**  
**Pilot questionnaire**

**Dear respondents,**

We, the researchers, are conducting a sociolinguistic study about the Indian community in Yemen. We would like to express our gratitude in advance for your taking the time in answering the following questions about the Indians of Yemen in Aden.

**Community Profile Questions**

1. Do all the Indians of Yemen speak Arabic? ( ) Yes ( ) No
2. What other languages do they speak? Name them.
3. From what parts (regions) in India did they come?
4. What reasons made them come to Yemen?
5. Where do the Indians of Yemen live in Aden?
6. Are there Indian neighborhoods where the Indians live by themselves? Name them?
7. Where else in Yemen do they live?
8. Are there any Indian schools in Aden? If yes, can you name them?
9. What is the educational background of the Indians of Yemen? Name them.
10. What is the religious background of the Indians of Yemen? Name them.
11. Are there any religious places, centers, temples that they attend? Can you name them?
12. Are there any Indian cultural and sports clubs? If yes, can you name them?
13. Name some of the celebrations and festivals that they celebrate?
14. Are there any Indian musicians who play music in Aden? If yes, can you name them?
15. What kind of jobs do they have? Name them?
16. What kind of business do they manage? Name them?
17. Are there any newspapers written in Indian languages in Aden? If yes, can you name them?
18. Are there any Indian radio stations in Aden? Name them?
19. Are there any Indian restaurants in Aden? If yes, can you name them?
20. In your opinion, do they visit their relatives in India? ( ) Yes ( ) No
21. How strong are the social relationships among the Indians in Aden?
22. Are there well-known personalities among the Indians of Yemen who hold high positions in the country? (Like members of the parliament, municipality, head of big business corporation, high ranking religious person...etc.) Name them.

**Respondents' demographic background**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. Where were you born?
4. What is your highest grade completed?
5. What is your occupation?



<b>Proficiency</b>	<b>V. good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Poor</b>
1. How proficient are you in speaking your Indian ethnic language? Name it: ...				
2. How proficient are in speaking Arabic?				
3. How proficient are you in understanding your Indian ethnic language?				
4. How proficient are you in understanding Arabic?				
5. How proficient are you in reading your Indian ethnic language?				
6. How proficient are you in reading Arabic?				
7. How proficient are you in writing your Indian ethnic language?				
8. How proficient are you in writing Arabic?				

### **VI. The factors that support the use of the Indian ethnic languages**

Please read the following statements and show to what degree you agree with them by putting (X) in the proper box only.

<b>Factors that support the use of my ethnic language</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1. Having two Indian parents helped me to maintain my Indian ethnic language.			
2. Having my grandparents when I was a child helped me to maintain my Indian ethnic			
3. My family and the home play an important role in preserving my Indian ethnic language.			
4. Visiting relatives in India helps us maintain our Indian ethnic language.			
5. Internal marriages with Indians help us maintain our Indian ethnic language.			
6. Watching Indian TV programs helps the Indians maintain their Indian ethnic languages.			
7. The tight relations among the Indians of Yemen help them maintain their languages.			
8. Indian community leaders play a vital role in maintaining our Indian ethnic language.			
9. The pride in my Indian identity has a role in maintaining my Indian ethnic language.			
10. The relaxed linguistic climate in Yemen helps the Indian ethnic groups maintain their Indian			

11. Living in an Indian community in Aden has helped the Indians maintain their Indian ethnic			
12. The place of worship in Aden has a role in preserving the Indian languages.			
13. The Indian social clubs in Aden have a role in maintaining the Indian languages.			
14. The Indian schools in Aden have a role in maintaining the Indian languages.			
15. Using the Indian languages during the British colonization helped the Indians in Aden maintain their Indian ethnic languages.			

**Appendix (D)**  
**Transliteration System for Arabic Sounds adopted from IJAES**

Consonants			
Arabic Alphabets	Symbols	Examples	Meaning
	h	hub	love
	kh	khubz	bread
	z	zi:t	oil
	s	sin	tooth
	s	sayf	summer
	t	ti:n	mud
	c	cabd	slave
	f	fa:r	mouse
	q	qalam	pencil
	l	naml	ants
	m	masjid	mosque
	n	na:r	fire
هـ/	h	haram	pyramid
	w	ward	rose
	y	yawm	day
Vowels and Diphthongs			
( )	a	kataba	he wrote
( )	u	kutub	books
( )	i	sin	tooth
/ طويل	a:	ka:tib	writer
طويلة	u:	fu:l	beans
طويلة	i:	fi:l	elephant
Diphthongs ( )	ay	bayt	house