Cross-Dialectal Communication Strategies among Heritage Speakers of Arabic in the United States

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Honors Thesis

Abstract

This research investigates cross-dialectal Arabic interactions among Arabic heritage speakers in the United States. It serves to analyze AHS’ use of Arabic with heritage speakers of dialects other than their own and how their use of Arabic varies according to the language stability of the speech community they live in. Fifteen AHS participated in this study, seven of which were in Gainesville and eight were in Dearborn. All participants completed a knowledge gap task in pairs. They were instructed to carry out the interactions strictly in Arabic. Each participant employed her/his knowledge of Arabic in cooperation with her/his partner to reach a common goal. This resulted in participants employing a number of communication strategies, such as semantic negotiation, circumlocution, accommodation, and borrowing from English, to mitigate dialectal and proficiency barriers. Variations in the use of Arabic were also detected according to the region; pairs from Gainesville were more likely to circumlocute and negotiate, while pairs in Dearborn were more likely to accommodate and borrow.

Keywords: Arabic – heritage speakers – communication strategies – cross-dialectal communication – circumlocution – negotiation – borrowing – accommodation – language acquisition
1. INTRODUCTION

Heritage speakers in the United States cover a vast range of profiles in the sociolinguistic context. Heritage speakers can be described on a spectrum ranging from children who merely identify with an ancestral ethnic group and have no competence in the heritage language to children who identify with an ancestral home and can read, write, understand, and speak the heritage language fluently. Valdés refines the profile of a heritage speaker to “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdés 2000 qtd. in Montrul 2011).

Often, heritage speakers in the U.S. face a common problem: heritage language maintenance. This linguistic conflict arises because most American communities in the U.S. are English-dominated, and rarely do heritage speakers employ their heritage language outside of the home. Academic instruction, interaction within their social circles, and other day-to-day affairs often take place in English, thus asserting that the heritage language’s only role is in the home. To add, in order for members of an ethnic group to preserve a language, the language must be transmitted from generation to generation, and if there is no transmission of the language, the unfortunate result is that of language loss (Bills 2010 qtd. in Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012). For these reasons, with English overshadowing minority languages in most communities, a very predictable pattern of language loss occurs among descendants of immigrants: immigrants tend to become bilingual by the second generation, which is typically the heritage speaker generation, and English monolinguals by the third (Hudson-Edwards & Bills 1982; Solé, 1990).

However, there are communities in the United States that do defy this pattern. Miami mirrors the exact opposite of these circumstances, where 69% of the population is
Hispanic/Latino (Suburban Stats). Here, Spanish encompasses an umbrella of different uses: that of an “immigrant language, the mother tongue of members of a large Cuban-American community and their children, and a public language of work and government” (Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012). In addition, numerous primary education schools offer Spanish-English bilingual programs, such as Sunset Elementary, Coral Way K-8 Center, International Studies Preparatory Academy (ISPA), and many other public schools. In this case, heritage language use manifests itself inside the home and in professional and academic settings, which allows linguistic transmission not only in the home, but its maintenance and use outside of it in a variety of different affairs. This creates a stable speech community for Spanish, where the language can be preserved up to the third generation.

Unlike the aforementioned Spanish-speaking community, Arabic heritage speakers (AHS) are much less in number in the United States, numbering about 3.7 million (Arab American Institute), less than 1% of the population. However, this relatively small number is not the sole factor challenging the establishment of a suitable speech community. The diglossic and highly diverse nature of Arabic, along with AHS’ diverse language attitudes and cultural identities are arguably some of the leading factors impeding a suitable Arabic speech community in the U.S. (Albirini 2016).

The main purpose of my study is to test for cross-dialectal competence among AHS in the United States. Two distinct Arabic sociolinguistic communities were investigated: Gainesville, Florida and Dearborn, Michigan. The first represents the weak Arabic speech communities in most cities of the U.S. The second is a rich speech community consisting of a vast population of Arabic speakers that use Arabic in and outside of the home, including social

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1 https://suburbanstats.org/population/florida/how-many-people-live-in-miami
2 https://www.aaiusa.org/demographics
circles, at the supermarket, religious services, and other daily affairs where the default language may be Arabic.

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of native speakers experience with Arabic in their countries contrasted to the experience of heritage speakers’ in the United States. Section 3 presents a detailed overview of previous studies related to Arabic speakers, communicative strategies, and L2-learner communication in Arabic and in other languages. Section 4 introduces the research questions explored in this study and expectations. Following, Section 5 details the methods carried out in the study. Section 6 presents the results of the study and Section 7 discusses the significance of these results and other occurrences that took place in the study. Finally, Section 8 concludes this research paper.

2. NATIVE VERSUS HERITAGE SPEAKERS’ EXPERIENCE WITH ARABIC

2.1 Native speakers’ language experience in the native context

Native speakers of Arabic encounter a vastly different experience with Arabic as an L1 in their countries as opposed to AHS. Native speakers’ typical upbringing with two Arabic varieties is a distinguishable feature from that of their heritage speaker counterparts. The first variety, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is explicitly acquired through schooling and passively through exposure to news broadcasting, sermons in places of worship, and other forms of formal communication that employ MSA. The local dialect, on the other hand, is acquired in the home. This language duality is known as diglossia, a situation in which two language varieties are used under different conditions or in different contexts, in which one is the lower variety and the other the higher variety (Ferguson 1959). MSA is typically used in academic, professional, legal, and religious affairs and is therefore perceived as the higher variety. Conversely, colloquial varieties are used in all other casual contexts, therefore perceived as the lower variety. However, this
dichotomy is not as clear-cut as Ferguson described 60 years ago. With higher access to education, nearly 100% in countries like Tunisia for example, the majority of Tunisians have some access to MSA. However, because the prescriptive rules of MSA and the lexicon are different in significant ways from that of the colloquial dialects, very few Tunisians master MSA. Instead, it is commonplace to use both MSA and the colloquial varieties in instances where MSA’s presence is expected, as Walters calls it “diglossic codeswitching” (2003). Radio interviews are a perfect example of diglossic codeswitching, where the high variety is often the unmarked choice. Interlocutors often use features from MSA and Tunisian Arabic with either varieties acting as the matrix language, which establishes the syntactic and inflectional morphological base for speech, or the embedded language, which is the contributing language that adheres to the matrix language’s foundational rules (Myers-Scotton 1993). Often times, if interlocutors hail from the same country, they gradually shift towards their colloquial varieties (Schultz 1981 qtd. in Walters 2003). It is important to add that diglossic codeswitching occurs across all levels of social classes. For instance, less-skilled speakers of MSA still use the high variety in places they feel it is necessary, although their attempt at diglossic codeswitching is often ungrammatical because they tend to violate structural norms (Walters, 2003). Such instances could occur anywhere where the higher variety is expected, including but not limited to interviews, places of worship, and professional and academic settings. On the other hand, educated families, with more exposure and use of MSA, use certain lexical items in their everyday speech from the higher variety and pass it down to their children, who often use MSA as a “lexical resource” (Walters, 2003).

Native Arabic speakers who were born and raised in an Arab country not only experience diglossia but also cross-dialectal exposure on a regular basis. Many Arabs experience exposure
to foreign Arabic dialects, especially through the media, including TV shows and movies from countries other than their own (Albirini 2016). A number of televised programs, such as the *Arab Voice*, consist of participants from various countries across the Arab world communicating in Arabic. The participants tend to keep their linguistic features when they speak and accommodate using MSA or a colloquial variety that both the audience and the participant are familiar with, such as Levantine Arabic. The degree of accommodation varies according to how mutually intelligible the accommodator’s native variety is to others. A case in point is when a Moroccan participant auditioning on *Arab Voice* in January 2014 accommodated to the judges and audience in Beirut, Lebanon instead of communicating solely in Moroccan Arabic.

The judges natively spoke dialects widely recognizable to the Pan-Arab world, such as Levantine and Egyptian. Moroccan Arabic, while intelligible to North Africans, such as Algerians, is not readily intelligible to Arabs from more geographically distant countries, such as Syria or Kuwait. By accommodating to the judges and the audience, the performer was widely understood. Nevertheless, although some performers accommodate to varying degrees, there is still a high degree of cross-dialectal features and transactions on reality shows such as the *Arab Voice*, which are televised to the Pan-Arab world and highly popular in the region. The popularity of these shows across the Arab world suggests that native speakers across the Arab world have high cross-dialectal competence.

### 2.2 AHS’ language experience with Arabic in the nonnative context

The reality of the aforementioned speakers stands in stark contrast with Arabic heritage speakers (AHS) who were born and raised in an Arab household in the United States. AHS typically grow up with only one variety of Arabic: their parents’ colloquial dialect, which is

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[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQw2WwvC1PM
rarely seen outside of the home or in the media. One implication of this circumstance is the absence of the notion of diglossia. Although in some respects AHS may encounter some experiences with MSA in their childhood, such as in places of worship and Arabic television (Albirni, 2016), MSA exposure is very limited. Therefore, their competence in this higher register, if any at all, is very minimal, unless they choose to pursue formal instruction in MSA at the university level, and even then their level of proficiency in MSA rarely reaches the level of proficiency of the educated native speaker.

Although AHS have scarce knowledge of MSA, they occasionally codeswitch between their vernaculars and MSA for purposes different from those of native speakers. Native speakers switch between MSA and their vernacular depending on context and function, such as if they are in an academic setting giving a presentation or a casual one gossiping with friends. AHS on the other hand, lack this notion of contextual codeswitching between MSA and vernaculars because they do not live the daily reality of Arabic in a diglossic context (Albirini, 2016). Albirini conducted a study on Egyptian and Palestinian AHS’ grammatical features in oral production by having them narrate two stories in Arabic and talk about themselves and their families. In several instances, participants used lexicon found almost exclusively in MSA, such as ʔaxawaːt and ʂeiːfaːːn. The first word means “sisters,” which differs from the speaker’s dialectal pronunciation for sisters, xawaat or ʔixwaat. As for the second word, ʂeif means “summer” and -aːn is a dual morpheme marker. In this example, the dual morpheme marker -aːn is used in MSA and rarely used in colloquial varieties (Albirni & Benmamoun 2014). Participants were instructed to speak in their heritage dialect without any restrictions to only that variety. This strategy allowed speakers to codeswitch to English or MSA as lexical resources as they naturally would. This explains the use of words and morphemes found almost exclusively in MSA.
Not only does the restriction to their heritage vernaculars inhibit AHS’ fluency in MSA, it is also an inhibitor for cross-dialectal competence. Arabic varies predominantly in lexicon and phonology across regions, and because AHS are not regularly exposed to other varieties, they lack the cross-linguistic savviness that native speakers enjoy. As stated before, Arabic rarely appears in the American public sphere, causing AHS to veer towards English as they get older. Thus, AHS are characteristically confined to their heritage dialects with little to no input in other varieties.

Given the circumstances that Arabic is virtually absent in most American communities, most Arab-American communities in the U.S. do not form suitable Arabic speech communities. As opposed to the Cuban-American speech community in Miami that is more cohesive, most Arab-American communities are highly heterogeneous. As AHS in the American diaspora experience little language exposure, different social identities, and language attitudes, Arabic does not fare well as a heritage language across generations (Albirini, 2016).

In order for AHS to maintain Arabic across generations, heritage speaker language behavior must remain stable across a community. The reality of most Arab-American communities, however, does not match up to these standards. AHS do not live the reality between the interplay of MSA and Arabic vernaculars, and thus most have an incomplete grasp of the norms of the language. Arab-Americans also vary in degree of assimilation, backgrounds, and lifestyles, drawing another obstacle in forming a cohesive community (Sarroub 2005 qtd. in Albirini 2016). These differences isolate Arab-Americans from each other, principally restricting communication to immediate family so they are less likely to use Arabic with other Arab-Americans in the United States. The final factor in impeding a suitable Arabic speech community is racism and xenophobia against Arabs in the U.S. This causes AHS to cling to
different social identities: some proclaim themselves to identify more with American culture therefore linguistically and culturally assimilating, while others cling to their heritage cultures and preserve the language better (Albirini 2016). Connections between social identities and language proficiencies were determined in Albirini’s study with Egyptian and Palestinian AHS. Palestinians seemed to have a more accurate grasp of Arabic than did Egyptians, which Albirini, Benmamoun, and Saadah argued is likely due to the political situation in Palestine drawing Palestinian-Americans closer to their roots and bringing more solidarity among them (2011).

Although Arab-American speech communities in the U.S. seem to be unstable and segregated, there exist speech communities such as in southeastern Michigan that are stable and maintain the heritage language across generations much like in Miami.

To date, there have been no studies on AHS that examine their cross-dialectal competence in a strictly Arabic-speaking environment. Researchers such as Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky (2013) have encouraged research concerning heritage speakers in Dearborn, but with the need for a thorough demographic description of the community. Rouchdy (2013) provides a demographic summary of southeastern Michigan, which includes Dearborn. She also documents some speech phenomena characteristics of Arab-American speakers in the region, which will be later discussed in Section 3. This study refines the scope of research to specifically that of heritage speakers in this community and their cross-dialectal proficiencies compared to that of weak speech communities. It further takes into consideration the distinct speech communities’ degrees of language stability and how that may affect participants’ ability to work through the task. In other words, how do AHS’ use of Arabic in an unstable speech community, such as that of Gainesville, differ from the AHS’ Arabic in a stable speech community like Dearborn?
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section is dedicated to previous research studies on heritage speakers and Arabic as a heritage language in the United States. Each section offers a brief summary on what the studies investigated, methods, and results.

3.1 Blake and Zyzik (2003)

Blake and Zyzik conducted a study on heritage speakers’ and L2 learners’ interactions through an online platform. This study aimed to answer questions about the speakers’ networked communication online. Blake and Zyzik recruited Spanish heritage speakers and Spanish L2 learner students to intercommunicate with each other via an online chatroom. In this study, Blake and Zyzik investigated the following questions:

- Do HS’ and L2 learners’ negotiation strategies match that of L2 and L2 learner pairs?
- Do interactions between HS and nonnative speakers (NNS) put an emphasis on lexical or grammatical linguistic elements, or both?
- Which speakers tend to initiate negotiations more often? Which of them tend to solve them more frequently? Do both types of speakers reap equal amounts of benefits from these interactions?
- Do both parties use new lexical “items” or “grammatical structures” as a result of the task’s requirement to write? (520)

Blake and Zyzik recruited eleven heritage speakers and eleven L2 learners of intermediate Spanish in the fall semester of 1999 at the University of California. In the pool of heritage speakers, two types of heritage speakers were identified: 1) those who had lived in a Spanish-speaking country until the age of 10 and had been living in the U.S. for a minimum of 8
years with native Spanish speaker parents and 2) those who were raised in the U.S. with at least one native speaker parent speaking some Spanish at home but with an English preference. Most importantly, Blake and Zyzik drew on Valdés’s definition of a heritage speaker:

“a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language.” (2000)

One of the most important features in this study is that it draws on Valdés’s definition of a heritage speaker to refine participant eligibility, which I will also use in my study.

The procedure of this study consisted in pairing participants together strategically, followed by a jigsaw task that required input from both parties in order to reach a common goal. Heritage speakers and L2 learners were paired and seated at computers in different buildings. Students were instructed in English to connect with each other through an online chatting system that recorded and saved their interactions. The only knowledge pairs had of each other is that their partner was another student of Spanish, no detail was given about their linguistic background. Following the connection, students were given instructions for their jigsaw task. This game consisted in an apartment hunting game where each student had a role assigned to them. In each pair, one student played the role of a person looking for an apartment based on a personality including likes, dislikes, and a budget. The other student was in charge of finding the apartment hunter an apartment according to their personality. The instructions for the game were given in English through the webpage. The goal of this game was to solve the apartment hunting task using only Spanish and sharing their apartment listings, each of which had 4 listings, in order to find the most suitable match. Apartment listings were in Spanish, which were retrieved from a Madrid apartment finding website. Online communication among pairs lasted one hour.
This jigsaw task resulted in 30 instances of negotiation between students, distributed as follows: 24 lexical negotiations, four grammatical negotiations, and two pragmatic negotiations. Most of these, 24, were resolved by the heritage speakers while six were resolved by the L2 learners. Communication gaps were resolved by clarification requests, expansions, recasts, and self-corrections similar to those that have been recorded in face-to-face interactions. Both groups initiated negotiations, although heritage speakers were usually the ones to resolve them. Another finding was that lexical negotiations had a positive effect on use of new vocabulary, in other words, with new knowledge of vocabulary, students immediately implemented it in their online interactions, indicating a short-term change in L2 learners’ linguistic knowledge. Heritage speakers were also exposed to new vocabulary found in standard Spanish that could expand their knowledge of the Spanish language; for instance in one transaction, the L2 learner introduced a word found in standard Spanish añadir ‘to add’ to the heritage speaker. Furthermore, because heritage speakers were of Chicano background, some Chicano words were exchanged, such as agarrar meaning ‘to grab’ in standard Spanish but also ‘to obtain’ in Chicano Spanish.

This study bears plenty of information on how students of differing proficiencies and language varieties communicate and help each other. The following study offers some information on how Arabic L2 learners and heritage speakers’ language experiences affect unfamiliar dialect listening ability.

3.2 Trentman (2011)

One Trentman (2011) is a study on AHS and L2 learners of Arabic. The author centers her study on L2-learners of Arabic and dialectal transfer. Trentman explores the question of which Arabic dialect should be taught in the classroom, and thus in her study she provides some insight to this question by investigating how the listening ability of MSA and familiar Arabic
dialects would influence the comprehension of nonfamiliar Arabic dialects. The focus of her study is dialectal transfer. This is defined as when a speaker is familiar with a particular dialect and transfers the linguistic features of that dialect onto a new one in order to understand.

Although Arabic varies geographically, the dialects share many common features that allow transfer to happen. For example, morphemes such as [b-] are prefixed on imperfective verbs in Levantine and North African dialects, but [k-] is prefixed in the Moroccan dialect. Speakers of either dialect can transfer this knowledge to the new unfamiliar one. In her study, two cases of dialect transfer took place: first, transfer between Egyptian and Levantine dialects (EL) and second, transfer between Egyptian/Levantine dialects and unfamiliar dialects accommodating to MSA (accommodation transfer case). For the EL transfer case, three questions were investigated:

1) Is there a relationship between MSA listening ability and the ability to understand Egyptian or Levantine Arabic as an unfamiliar dialect?

2) Is there a relationship between familiar dialect listening ability and the ability to understand Egyptian or Levantine Arabic as an unfamiliar dialect?

3) Which is a better predictor of the ability to understand Egyptian or Levantine Arabic as an unfamiliar dialect: MSA listening ability or familiar dialect listening ability?” (29)

The accommodation transfer case investigated the following three questions:

1) “Is there a relationship between MSA listening ability and the ability to understand other Arabic dialects (Iraqi, Gulf, and North African) when the speakers of these dialects are accommodating towards MSA?

2) Is there a relationship between familiar dialect listening ability and the ability to understand these unfamiliar dialects?
3) Which is a better predictor of the ability to understand these unfamiliar dialects: MSA listening ability or familiar dialect listening ability?” (29-30)

Trentman predicts that the listening ability of MSA and familiar dialects will positively impact the comprehension of unfamiliar dialects.

In carrying out this study, Trentman recruited 58 participants of which many she defines as heritage speakers and others nonnative speakers. However, unlike Blake and Zyzik’s study, Trentman defines heritage speakers in her study as students who are of Arab descent, but do not necessarily speak the language at home or with family. In addition, the exposure participants received in a particular dialect was also measured loosely. Students who had lived in a country where a particular dialect was spoken but had not used it or had peers that spoke it were counted as exposed. Students who stated having a dialect that they were most proficient in but had no course work or foreign experience in it were also counted as exposed. Despite these loosely measured variables, most participants were advanced speakers of Arabic who were acquainted with various dialects. Among these, Egyptian was the most common followed by Levantine varieties. Other dialect groups that were considered were North African, Gulf, and Iraqi.

Trentman systematically eliminated participants for each transfer case to obtain more accurate results. For example, in the EL transfer case, Trentman eliminated participants who had exposure to both Levantine and Egyptian dialects. This elimination was necessary because speakers, whether they had knowledge of Levantine or Egyptian Arabic (but not both), would need to be unfamiliar with one of these dialects in order for dialect transfer in this case to occur. In the accommodation case, she eliminated participants who had exposure to Iraqi, Gulf, or North African dialects and those who had no dialect exposure. Participants who had exposure to these dialects would be ineligible because they would be able to understand without the need for
dialect transfer from a familiar one to an unfamiliar one. Those who did not have exposure to any were ineligible because according to Trentman, their lack of knowledge on how dialects deviate from MSA would impede comprehension.

Participants took a background questionnaire on their Arabic language experience. Such questions included classes they had taken, dialect exposure, study abroad experiences, reason for studying Arabic, and the importance of the language to them. Such questions included:

1) “Do you speak Arabic with your family?"
2) How important is Arabic to your daily life?
3) Why are you studying Arabic?” (31)

Once participants were deemed eligible for each case, they took an Arabic listening test. This consisted of 30 audio recordings, five for each variety that included MSA, Egyptian, Lebanese, Tunisian, Iraqi, and Saudi. The audio recordings were of native speakers of each dialect responding to questions and one native speaker answering in MSA to five questions. These samples were edited so that they would be similar based on length and content. Recordings were played out of order so that participants would not hear the same dialect twice, as this would influence their comprehension. Each recording was played twice followed by two free response questions in English. Free response was preferable since it allowed participants to recall on their own understanding of the material as opposed to guessing on multiple choice. Each question was worth one point, and because there were two questions per video on a dialect, the maximum score participants could receive on a dialect was ten.

This experiment concluded in interesting results. Every group scored lowest on MSA listening tests, including the group with no dialect exposure. In the EL transfer case, the group with only Levantine exposure scored highest in all dialects, while those with Egyptian exposure
scored highest in their dialect only. In other words, the group with only Levantine exposure surpassed the comprehension of every dialect, better than participants who claimed other dialects to be their best dialect. For Trentman’s first research question, regarding both the EL case and accommodation case, it was confirmed that there is a relationship between MSA listening ability and unfamiliar dialect listening ability. The second research question in both the EL transfer case and the accommodation case confirmed that there is a clear and positive relationship between familiar and unfamiliar dialect listening abilities. Finally, the third research question, regarding the EL transfer case, confirmed that familiar dialect listening ability is a better predictor for unfamiliar dialect listening ability. In the accommodation case, MSA listening ability is a better predictor for unfamiliar dialects accommodating to MSA, however, only slightly.

3.3 Rouchdy (2013)

Rouchdy (2013) describes the demographics and language situation in Dearborn as a stable speech community. However, I will solely focus on Rouchdy’s discussion on language contact phenomena in stable Arabic speech communities for this section and discuss the demographics of the region later in this paper.

Rouchdy identifies three linguistic phenomena in language contact situations: codeswitching, borrowing, and interference. Following, Haugen (1973), she defines codeswitching as that of “the alternate use of two languages including everything from the introduction of a single, unassimilated word up to a complete sentence or more in the context of another language.” She then defines borrowing as “the transfer of lexical items from one language to another” (2013). As opposed to codeswitching, borrowing includes speakers who are not competent in the dominant language and who use single terms from the dominant language into speech without alternating between languages. Finally, interference is defined as speakers
incorrectly employing the dominant language’s grammar onto the subordinate language, leading to skill attrition in the subordinate language.

Rouchdy examines these language contact phenomena to determine language choice of Arab-American speakers. Her analysis focuses mostly on borrowing, provides various instances where it occurred, and an analysis of the instances regarding speakers, lexical categories, and syntax. In her analysis, she states that nouns were the most commonly borrowed terms from English followed by verbs. The following examples illustrate utterances of borrowed nouns and verbs.

1) \textit{Tarakit-ha} \hspace{0.5cm} \textit{bi-k-kar}
\begin{flushleft}
left-her \hspace{0.5cm} in-the-car
\end{flushleft}

‘He left her in the car.’

\textit{Fakkas-na} \hspace{0.5cm} \textit{as-sayyaara}
\begin{flushleft}
Fixed-we \hspace{0.5cm} the-car
\end{flushleft}

‘We fixed the car.’

In (1), the borrowed word is an English noun while the rest of the utterance is in Arabic. Insertion of this foreign term is modified to fit the grammar rules of the matrix language Arabic. In other words, the noun is inserted inside the prepositional phrase following the order of preposition, definite article, and noun. In (2), the borrowed word \textit{fakkas} is a verb. It follows subject-verb agreement and is conjugated in the past tense, therefore satisfying the rules of Arabic. Another interesting feature is that the phonology of the word changes, where in English it is pronounced as \textit{/fiks/} and in Arabic it is converted to a Pattern II verb (C1aC2C2aC3) and pronounced as \textit{/fakkas/}. This could be a result of incorporating the foreign word into the phonotactics of the speaker’s dialect, however further support is needed to confirm this
statement. Nonetheless, these examples show that Arab-Americans tend to borrow words from English and modify them according to Arabic phonology and grammar.

This data was retrieved from Arabic speakers in different neighborhoods of Detroit. Rouchdy interviewed speakers in schools and family gatherings in addition to recordings of natural conversations between another researcher, Seikaly, and her participants. These data yielded conversations in which the three language phenomena described occurred in a natural setting. The occurrence of these phenomena in a natural setting sheds light on how Arabic speakers use Arabic in stable speech communities.

Rouchdy concludes her analysis affirming that the interplay of Arabic and English creates an “ethnic language” specific to the Arab-American community. Although this language is a result of Arab immigration, it is not mutually understood by Arab immigrants outside of the United States or native speakers in Arab countries. Following this point, the language contact and conflict situation leads to two concluding statements. The first is the inevitable skill attrition of spoken Arabic in the United States. Second, linguistic changes in Arab-Americans’ lingua franca as a result of language contact is “an accomplishment of performance resulting in an ethnic language that acts as a bond of Arab Americans,” potentially allowing the community to preserve the lingua franca (2013).

3.4 Liskin-Gasparro (1996)

Liskin-Gasparro’s (1996) study evaluated Spanish L2-learners’ resort to circumlocution. This study investigated three research questions:

1) “How do high intermediate and advanced students of Spanish cope with lexical gaps?

2) Is there a relationship between the communication strategy selected and the proficiency level of the speaker?
3) Do the lexical repair strategy data gathered from oral proficiency interviewer (OPIs) of intermediate-high and advanced speakers corroborate the statements about use of communication strategies, particularly circumlocution in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Guidelines?” (318)

Researchers conducted seventeen OPIs with L2 students of Spanish. After these recorded interviews, researchers identified, analyzed, and transcribed instances of communication strategies used by the students. These strategies include codeswitching, hesitations, approximation, circumlocution, and other techniques that speakers applied to their speech when the subject at hand caused linguistic difficulty, particularly lexical difficulties.

This especially set out to examine students’ use of circumlocution when they failed to retrieve necessary lexical terms. Circumlocution is defined as a “roundabout way of speaking” in which speakers describe a concept, often relying on more lexical items than needed to transmit the idea (Salomone & Marsal 2008). Of the many findings in this study, the most relevant one in regards to my research study is that advanced speakers of Spanish tended to apply L2-based communication strategies such as circumlocution, while less advanced speakers asked for assistance or switched to English for help.

Although this study was comprehensive in the analysis of many different communicative strategies used by L2-learners, it did not examine accommodation. The nature of this study did not require interviewees to accommodate since they were L2-learners simply asked to speak of a certain subject in the language they were taught, whereas accommodation typically takes place when interlocutors may not be familiar with each other’s dialects. Other lines of research have investigated accommodation as a communicative strategy in cross-dialectal interactions such as the study below.
3.5 Soliman 2014

Soliman (2014) analyzes Arabic native speakers’ accommodation to other dialects in casual dialogue using MSA. Although the author refers to the use of MSA as borrowing, the correct term in this context would be dialectal codeswitching. Walters (2003) defines the expression ‘dialectal codeswitching’ as a linguistic phenomena native speakers use, particularly for lexicon in MSA and colloquial varieties, when they cannot sustain a conversation in MSA such as in radio interviews, or perhaps in this case, cross-dialectal communication. Regardless, Soliman’s study includes many interesting findings in regards to Arabic cross-dialectal communication. It served to explore what techniques native speakers use and what elements from MSA they tend to employ in cross-dialectal communications. This pattern of native speaker linguistic behavior could then be taught to Arabic L2 learners in the classroom.

Soliman recorded 11 conversations between 21 speakers of Arabic. These 21 speakers represented 12 different dialects from the Arab world. Participants then conversed about casual topics such as their favorite foods and their weekend plans. All speakers relied mostly on their native dialect to communicate, with some resorting to MSA. Findings revealed that speakers from North Africa were most likely to borrow from MSA than speakers of other dialects. As for the most borrowed linguistic element, nouns were most commonly borrowed from MSA to reach mutual lexical comprehensibility.

The linguistic behavior of the participants in Soliman’s study reveals how native speakers would typically behave in cross-dialectal interactions and the significance of MSA knowledge in conversations where speakers may not be acquainted with each other’s dialects. Although AHS typically have less exposure to MSA and therefore less proficiency to none than educated native
speakers, any schooling and knowledge they have acquired on the subject may be employed in their interactions with others for the same reasons as that of the native speakers in this study.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS & EXPECTATIONS

I plan to investigate the following questions in my study, particularly focusing on the lexical element of language. Below each question, I include some of the outcomes I expect to observe accordingly.

- How does heritage speakers’ limited knowledge of a given Arabic variety affect their ability to understand and communicate with other varieties? How does heritage speakers’ exposure to other colloquial varieties of Arabic or the lack thereof affect their ability to understand and communicate with these varieties?

Depending on heritage speakers’ exposure to other Arabic dialects, knowledge of only a particular Arabic dialect may negatively impact their ability to understand other dialects, especially if they are dialects whose regions are geographically distant from each other. In Gainesville, I believe AHS may not fare well understanding and communicating with AHS of different linguistic backgrounds if they are only exposed to their own heritage dialect. However, exposure to MSA in Arabic language classes at the university may help them fare better in the study. In the Dearborn area, I believe that AHS will fare better in comprehension and communication. This is because they have more contact with new arrivals from different regions in the Arab world, more exposure to other dialects through Arabic media in the region, and Arabic’s status as a lingua franca in many social settings (Rouchdy 2013).
Does formal education in MSA (e.g., in Sunday schools, mosque, Arabic language classes) help heritage speakers’ ability to understand and communicate with varieties of Arabic other than their own?

Education in MSA will facilitate communication among AHS of different dialectal backgrounds because it is often used as a lexical resource to bridge dialectal differences among native Arabic speakers (Albirini 2016; Walters 2013; Soliman 2014). In addition, AHS have used MSA infelicitously to discuss casual matters when they do not have the ability to express it in their heritage dialect, which Albirini, Benmamoun, and Saadah attributes to their lack of experience with Arabic diglossia (2011). Because MSA is an Arabic variety understood across most of the Arab world and many AHS have been exposed to it in some form, this could help their performance comprehension- and communication-wise.

How do AHS’ use of Arabic in cross-dialectal interactions differ according to the speech community they live in?

AHS living in more stable speech communities may exhibit more competence in cross-dialectal interactions due to frequent interactions with members of diverse linguistic backgrounds in the Arab-American community. On the other hand, AHS living in unstable speech communities like Gainesville may not have the level of cross-dialectal competence as those in stable speech communities due to less contact with other varieties of Arabic. In addition, because AHS in unstable speech communities use Arabic in less settings than those in stable speech communities, this may impose more challenges proficiency-wise which could then affect their performance in cross-dialectal interactions.

5. METHOD
5.1 Participants

A total of 15 AHS participated in this study, eight from Gainesville and seven from Dearborn. Participants in Gainesville were recruited through personal acquaintanceship and emailing members of student cultural organizations on campus. Participants in Dearborn were also recruited through emailing members of student cultural organizations and references from staff at Henry Ford College. Once recruited, all participants filled out a questionnaire that offered some insight into their language background.

All AHS recruited for this study had lived in the U.S. for most of their lives. While some AHS have spent months visiting countries in the Arab world with their families, there were some participants who had lived in the Arab World for short periods of time in early childhood. One participant in Dearborn had lived in Egypt until the age of eight and since then has resided in the United States. Although this differs from most of the AHS participant population in this study, I consider this participant a heritage speaker for this study following a similar practice by Blake and Zyzik (2003). In their study, some heritage speakers of Spanish were qualified eligible although they had lived in a Spanish-speaking country up to the age of 10. By definition, the students still meet Valdés’s (2000) definition of a heritage speaker and were therefore eligible for the study.

For identification purposes, participants are labeled according to their speech community and heritage dialect. The labels, represented in Table 1 below, are composed of abbreviations. The first letter represents the speech community while the letters after the dash represent the heritage dialect spoken. Some subjects are identified by two nationalities because their parents are of distinct origins, and therefore these participants grew up with two varieties. Subscripts are assigned to subjects who share the same speech community and heritage dialect.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Participant’s Speech Community and Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G-L1</td>
<td>Gainesville – Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-L2</td>
<td>Gainesville – Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-E1</td>
<td>Gainesville – Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-E2</td>
<td>Gainesville – Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-T</td>
<td>Gainesville – Tunisian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-P/J</td>
<td>Gainesville – Palestinian/Jordanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-S</td>
<td>Gainesville – Sudanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-I1</td>
<td>Dearborn – Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-I2</td>
<td>Dearborn – Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Y1</td>
<td>Dearborn – Yemeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Y2</td>
<td>Dearborn – Yemeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-E</td>
<td>Dearborn - Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Y/M</td>
<td>Dearborn – Yemeni/Moroccan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-P1</td>
<td>Dearborn – Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-P2</td>
<td>Dearborn – Palestinian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Participant identification labels

5.2 Instruments

AHS subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire prior to participating in the task for eligibility screening. This questionnaire consisted included 14 questions concerning their language background in Arabic as follows:

1) Where were you born? If born in an Arab country please state which one and your age when you came to the US.

2) Please state any Arab countries you have resided in and give an estimate of the time spent there.

3) Where is your family (i.e. parents, grandparents) from?
4) What language(s) do you speak with your family?

5) If you speak Arabic with your family, please state which variety/varieties you use (Fusha, Algerian, Yemeni, Lebanese, Iraqi, etc.)

6) Besides family, who else do you speak Arabic with (i.e. friends, coworkers, classmates, etc.)
   a. If you speak Arabic with people other than your family, what variety or varieties do you use?

7) Where do you speak Arabic?
   o Home
   o School
   o Work
   o Place of worship
   o Other:

8) How often do you use Arabic?
   a. Often (everyday)
   b. Sometimes
   c. Rarely
   d. Never

9) What does Arabic as a language mean to you? What purpose does it serve in your life?

10) What variety/varieties of Arabic do you speak/are familiar with (Fusha4, Algerian, Yemeni, Lebanese, Iraqi, etc.)?

11) How often do you SPEAK this variety/these varieties?
    Example: Lebanese (often); Iraqi (sometimes)

4 Fusha is the standardized, literary variety of Arabic that can be found in formal contexts.
a. Often (everyday)
b. Sometimes
c. Rarely
d. Never

12) How often are you EXPOSED to this variety/these varieties?
Example: Lebanese (often); Iraqi (sometimes)

a. Often (everyday)
b. Sometimes
c. Rarely
d. Never

13) Have you ever received instruction in Arabic, such as in Fusha in school, places of worship, etc.? If yes, please specify for how long and if you continue to receive instruction.

14) Do you watch or listen to any Arabic media (i.e. news, music, radio, TV, etc.)? If yes, please specify.

15) Do you often come into contact with other Arabic varieties? If yes, please specify where and which ones.

Table 2 below demonstrates all of the participants’ language backgrounds. The most notable difference between the two communities is where the participants speak Arabic. Outside of the home, most Gainesville participants reported using Arabic at their places of worship. Dearborn participants reported using it at work, school, and at their places of worship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dearborn (out of 8)</th>
<th>Gainesville (out of 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal instruction in MSA (Q12)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to Arabic media (Q13)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Arabic at school (Q6)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Arabic at work (Q6)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Arabic at their place of worship (Q6)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Arabic everyday (Q7)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to other varieties of Arabic (Q9, Q11, &amp; Q14)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak other varieties of Arabic (Q9)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent contact with other varieties (Q14)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Participant language backgrounds

Due to some time constraints, some participants completed the questionnaire after their participation. Only one participant in Gainesville was considered ineligible after performing the task due to her native speaker status.

After completion of the questionnaire, students were scheduled together in pairs for an information gap exercise where they each depicted a picture to their partner and drew according to the instructions without looking at each other. Participants of different dialectal and same dialectal backgrounds were paired together. Some participants did more than one trial, which allowed me to examine how their language choice changed depending on the dialect they encountered.

All participants were instructed to describe a picture to each other while their partners listened and drew to the best of their ability to match the description. To simplify, I will label one participant as Participant A and the other as Participant B. Each one had a picture that they were not allowed to show each other. Participant A was to describe his or her picture to Participant B while both were facing away from each other. Facing away from each other was necessary to keep communication strictly verbal. This way, if a misunderstanding arose as a result of differences in dialect or proficiency, it was resolved verbally and not by hand gestures. Pairs
were allowed to ask each other questions throughout the process. Once Participant B was done
drawing, the roles were reversed so that Participant B described a different picture and
Participant A drew accordingly. Each turn lasted between five and fifteen minutes.

Furthermore, for participants who were repeating trials, I alternated the order for who
went first. For example, if Participant A described his or her picture to Participant B first, then he
or she would describe second if they chose to do another session and vice versa. Subjects who
participated in multiple sessions did so either days apart or within the same day depending on
their availability. Switching the order of who went first in each trial was beneficial to my
analysis for a number of reasons. First, it allowed me to observe how participants’ language
choices altered when faced with the same or a different dialect. Second, it demonstrated how the
first interaction shaped the participants’ use of Arabic in the next. For example, there were some
instances in which participants’ lexicon became richer after interactions with other speakers,
allowing them to navigate through descriptions better in the second or third trials. Finally, it shed
some light not only on how being paired with a speaker of different dialectal background
influences language choice, but also on how being paired with someone of a higher proficiency
level improved their Arabic.

This task provides a common goal for pairs: to complete a picture as accurately as
possible according to their partner’s description. This information gap exercise involves both
participants sharing different sets of information and combining them to reach the goal, to
produce a precise replication of their partner’s picture description. Because the information each
partner has is different and their partner does not know it, communication is necessary to
transmit the knowledge and complete the task. In addition, the contrastive linguistic
backgrounds may even challenge information transfer between pairs, which is why they would
have to employ different communication strategies to decipher the messages. The nature of this task is an excellent way of eliciting verbal interactions among partners because verbal interaction and teamwork are absolute necessities for its completion.

The knowledge-gap activity further reinforced the stress for verbal input by having participants not look at each other or each other’s work until the very end. During communication, people tend to make use of their hands to describe objects, locations, shapes, and other physical aspects when they cannot explain them in words. Although hand gestures are a natural component of human face-to-face interaction, this study solely focuses on the linguistic aspect of AHS cross-dialectal interaction. Any obstructions to that goal may prevent the collection of valuable linguistic data.

Figures 1 and 2 are the pictures that participants described and replicated. The pictures are culturally inclusive – in other words, they portray images that I assumed the participants are familiar with and could name and describe no matter what their dialectal background is. This includes portrayals of natural scenery and day-to-day activities, such as playing at the beach and going to school. This decision takes into consideration that there are items that can be exclusive to a particular culture, and therefore this cultural exclusivity may mean that the item’s name exists only in that language.
Figure 1 – Beach picture

Figure 2 – Classroom picture
A speaking time of fifteen minutes was given to each participant. In total, sessions lasted no more than 45 minutes including fifteen minutes of speaking time for each subject, switching, and answering questions after the session was over.

After each session was completed, recordings were transcribed and analyzed for instances of negotiation, accommodation, borrowing, and circumlocution. Altogether, I observed AHS participants in both locations rely on negotiation, accommodation, circumlocution, and borrowing when faced with communicative challenges.

6. RESULTS

In both Gainesville and Dearborn, I recorded a total of 11 sessions with AHS. Each session consisted of two interactions, one in which one participant would describe their picture, and another in which the other participant would describe their picture as well. One session in Gainesville was deemed ineligible because one of the participants was a native speaker. This change resulted in a total of ten recorded sessions with AHS – five in each city.

In Gainesville, I recorded three cross-dialectal interactions and two same-dialect interactions. In Dearborn, I recorded two cross-dialectal sessions and three same-dialect interactions. Each interaction was analyzed for instances in which participants used communicative strategies for certain lexical items. For example, if a participant used circumlocution multiple times to refer to the same lexical item, this was marked as an instance of circumlocution, rather than marking the number of times that the participant used circumlocution for the same word. This analysis resulted in the following results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative strategy</th>
<th>Gainesville</th>
<th>Dearborn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumlocution</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – Total Instances of Communication Strategies Used in All Interactions

Table 3 examines the total instances of communicative strategies used in all interactions. The number of lexical items that were subject to different communicative strategies differ the most for both locations in circumlocution and borrowing. Gainesville participants made the most use of circumlocution while Dearborn participants were more likely to borrow words from English in their interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative Strategy</th>
<th>Gainesville</th>
<th>Dearborn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumlocution</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Total Instances of Communication Strategies used in Same-Dialect Interactions

Table 4 illustrates the total instances of communication strategies in same-dialect interactions in both cities. In this chart, circumlocution appears to be split quite evenly between the two cities. On the other hand, the frequency of borrowing continues to show a noticeable difference between both locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative Strategy</th>
<th>Gainesville</th>
<th>Dearborn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumlocution</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Total Instances of Communication Strategies Used in Cross-Dialectal Interactions
Table 5 demonstrates the total instances of communication strategies in cross-dialectal interactions. Here, employment of circumlocution and negotiation as communicative strategies bears a noticeable difference between the two cities. The difference between borrowing in Gainesville and Dearborn is not as large in this context, but considering the participant pool size, it holds some significance and insight into AHS’ language choice in stable speech communities.

Upon further analysis of the data, Tables 6 and 7 reveal which pairs were more likely to use certain communicative strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairing</th>
<th>Negotiation</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Circumlocution</th>
<th>Borrowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese-Egyptian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisian-Lebanese</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian/Palestinian-Lebanese</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian-Egyptian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese-Lebanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Instances of Communicative Strategies Used in Each Pairing (Gainesville)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairing</th>
<th>Negotiation</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Circumlocution</th>
<th>Borrowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi - Yemeni/Moroccan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian - Yemeni</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemeni-Yemeni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi-Iraqi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian-Palestinian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 – Instances of Communicative Strategies Used in Each Pairing (Dearborn)

Gainesville pairs were more likely to negotiate whereas Dearborn pairs had less instances
of negotiation. Dearborn participants were also more likely to accommodate to their partners.

In addition, they resorted less to circumlocution for lexical items than did the Gainesville participants. Dearborn participants were also far more likely to borrow words from English than were their Gainesville counterparts.

The following is dedicated to provide examples of the nature of the communicative strategies and when they occurred. I will first discuss participants’ choices for borrowing, followed by circumlocution, negotiation, and accommodation in both locations.

Borrowing is a strategy that occurred in both locations, however with far more frequency in Dearborn than in Gainesville. As Table 3 shows, participants in Dearborn often resorted to borrowing from English to facilitate communication.

1) D-Y₁: wa kulu-hum kulu-hum maʕ-hum um ?idda:m-hum te:bl
   and all-them all-them with-them um in.front-them table
   ‘And all of them all of them have a table in front of them.’

Example (1) above illustrates an instance in which a Yemeni AHS described to his Egyptian AHS partner that each student in the picture was sitting behind a desk. As opposed to using the Arabic word ṭa:wla ‘table’ to describe the object, this participant borrowed from English to refer to the object. The use of this term was also shared by another participant in a same-dialect interaction with speaker DL-Y.

2) D-Y₂: (unintelligible) ha:qa l-taya:bl
   like the-tables
   ‘like the tables’

   D-Y₁: oh l-taya:bl .5 burtuqa:li:
   oh the-tables . orange
   ‘Oh the tables orange.’

5 Periods in transcriptions signify pauses of about one second.
Example (2) shows the interaction between two Yemeni-American speakers talking about tables in the classroom picture. Participant D-Y₂ asked Participant D-Y₁ for the color of the tables, to which he responded orange. This part of their interaction is especially interesting because of the borrowed plural English word ‘tables.’ Participant D-Y₂ had applied an irregular plural form pattern to the borrowed word te:bl. After this interaction, I asked other Yemeni-American speakers different ways they would say ‘tables’ when speaking Arabic. Many responded that they would simply say ṭawla:t or te:bla:t. The former is Arabic and the latter is borrowed from English with the Arabic sound plural feminine. One speaker said he has heard taya:bl from other Yemeni immigrants. Hence, this confirms that the borrowed word taya:bl is not only used by a specific person, rather, there are many speakers in this Arab-American community that use this word.

Instances of borrowing from English in Gainesville only occurred in a same-dialect interaction between two Egyptian AHS.

go from the-boy that you drew-it [mhms]
luq̌uy taḥt l-kura luq̌uy šewy ye kma:n
towards under the-ball towards a.little. more
‘aša:n fi: baby
because there baby
‘Go from the boy that you drew [mhms] towards under the ball a little bit more because there’s a baby.’

Example (3) illustrates an instance of borrowing between two Egyptian AHS in Gainesville. Participant G-E₂ expressed to her partner that there was a baby on the left hand-side of the page. Instead of using the Arabic word ṭīfūr or walad as native speaking participants did in a pilot study of this task, this participant used the borrowed word from English baby.

6 [word] signifies interjected speech from the other interlocutor
Another participant of Palestinian heritage in Dearborn had borrowed the word ‘baby’ to describe the same object in the picture.

The most notable difference between the two locations was the difference in resorting to circumlocution. Across all interactions in Dearborn, there were 34 instances of circumlocution whereas Gainesville witnessed 52. For cross-dialectal interactions, Dearborn had 11 instances while Gainesville had 28 instances. This difference in figures is very significant. This is partly because many of the Dearborn participants were able to recall terms for most of the objects in the pictures whereas many participants in Gainesville could not recall the name for these objects at the moment, such as ‘clouds’ and ‘shovel.’

   how we.say the-uh the-things the-uh the-white in-the-sky
   ‘What do we call the uh the white things . in the sky?’

G-Ei: uḥ l-. ʃhaːbe miš ‘aːrife bas ?ana .
   uh the . cloud? neg know but I .
   yaʔani: fahimtak
   anyway I.understood.you
   ‘Uh the . cloud? I don’t know but I . anyway I understood you.’

5) D-I: w xaːli: mkaːn min uḥ . yaʔni: mi θ l . min
   and empty place from uḥ . I.mean like . . from
   yaʔni: min uḥ . ɡuyuːm w la-ʃamis
   I.mean from uh . clouds and the-sun
   ‘and an empty space from uh . I mean like . . I mean from uh . the clouds to the sun.’

   there sun and there clouds and there . . . . . . uḥ
   rasimti mayy?
   you.drew water
   ‘There’s a sun and there’s clouds and there’s . . . . uh you drew water?’

D-I: ay rasimt mayy ʃamis ɡuyuːm
   yes i.drew water sun clouds
   ‘Yes I drew water, a sun, clouds.’
Example (4) represents an instance in a cross-dialectal interaction where one of the interlocutors could not recall the word for ‘cloud’ or ‘clouds’ at the moment. He elicited the help from his partner by describing the appearance of the objects and where they can be found, to which his partner responded *sha:be* ‘cloud.’ She then states that she is not sure but that she understands what he means. Participant G-E₁ drew the clouds on paper and they moved on to describe the rest of the picture.

Example (5) took place in Dearborn in a cross-dialectal interaction between an Iraqi AHS and a Yemeni/Moroccan AHS. Participant D-I₁ was able to recall the word for clouds when it was required of him, although some pausing. This interaction was also the first session he participated in where he accommodated a lot to his partner who was more familiar with Moroccan Arabic and less fluent. Later in example (6), D-I₁ was able to recall the word with a faster pace and less hesitation. Although it is not clear if the hesitations that happened in example (5) were because he was trying to find a way to accommodate or he simply did not have the term immediately available in his repertoire at the moment. Nevertheless, his performance in this later same-dialect interaction was much more fluid.

It is not to say that participants in Gainesville could not recall the word for ‘cloud’ when asked of them, but out of the seven participants in Gainesville, only two were able to recall the word on the spot while in Dearborn, five of the eight participants recalled the word when needed.

Circumlocution was not only limited to objects, it also extended to abstract subjects such as colors.

7) **G-L₁:** *oranž*
   orange
   ‘Orange.’

   **G-L₂:** ?ana kama:n ma: baːrif ʔism l-loːn
I also know the name of the color.

‘I also don’t know the name of the color.’

and this the-color whose NEG we.knew the-name
‘And this color whose name we didn’t know.’

Examples (7) and (8) are both taken from a same-dialect interaction between two Lebanese AHS. Participant G-L1 used the term ora:nž ‘orange,’ a borrowed word from French commonly used in Lebanon to describe the color orange. However, Participant G-L2 responded by saying that she also does not know the name of the color in (7), and for the rest of the interaction, they referred to the term as ‘this color,’ as shown in example (8).

Circumlocution for colors also occurred in Dearborn.

9) D-I1: uh lo:n l-tawila:t
uh color the-tables
‘UH, the color of the tables?’

D-Y/M: um . . naši:t kul l-lo:n uh . lo:n l-ṭawla -/ha/- .
um . . I-forgot all the-color uh . color the-table -/ha/- .

l-lo:n zeiy ha:da ṭa:wila l-ṭa:wila jambna
the-color like this table the-table next-to-us
‘Um . . I forgot all the colors uh . the color of the table . the color is like this table the table next to us.’

D-I1: yaˁni: žo:zi
meaning brown
‘Like brown?’

D-Y/M: ayyoua žo:zi:
yeah brown
‘Yeah brown.’

In (9), Participant D-Y/M did not have the names of colors in Arabic readily available in his repertoire, so instead, he approximated the color of the tables in the picture to that of the table they were both sitting at. Participant D-I1 was able to help his partner and provided him with the term žo:zi ‘brown.’
Semantic negotiation was a common communicative strategy between interlocutors when one interlocutor used a word that the other was not familiar with. This occurred in both locations, however with greater frequency in cross-dialectal interactions in Gainesville. Although there were three cross-dialectal interactions in Gainesville and only two in Dearborn, the frequency of negotiations that took place per cross-dialectal interaction in Gainesville are more than those of Dearborn. Taking into consideration both cross-dialectal and same-dialect interactions, the sum of these instances is greater in Gainesville than in Dearborn.

Negotiation often took place when an interlocutor used a word found almost exclusively in their heritage dialect.

Example (10) demonstrates an instance in which Participant G-L used the term ṭa:be ‘ball,’ that is commonly used in Lebanon. Participant G-P/J was not familiar with the term, and negotiated with G-L by relating it to something that children use to play with their feet.
Participant G-L\(_1\) confirms, and they move on to the next object. Later on in this interaction, Participant G-P/J confirms the meaning of \(\text{ṭa:be}\), as in example (11) below. This confirms that participant G-P/J was not previously familiar with the term.

11) G-P/J: \(y\text{aˁni: miš ũš \(\text{ṭa:be}\) luḡat l-kura}\)
   ‘So isn’t \(\text{ṭa:be}\) the word for kura?’

   G-L\(_1\): aha yes ‘Yes.’

Semantic negotiation of cross-linguistic terms happened in Dearborn as well. Example (12) below illustrates an instance of negotiation about the term karak ‘shovel’ in the Iraqi AHS’s repertoire. His partner, Participant D-Y/M, relates the term karak to balla ‘shovel,’ which is used in the Moroccan dialect.

12) D-I\(_1\): \(\text{ʔandu um karak. tˁarif l-karak}\)
   ‘He has um a shovel do you know karak?’

   D-Y/M: \(\text{ʔaʔiš l-karak}\)
   ‘No what the-shovel’

   D-I\(_1\): \(\text{ʔiši: la-raaml}\)
   ‘Uh like the thing for sand.’

   D-Y/M: \(\text{ʔaʔiš l-uziy la-uzu iy-}
   \(\text{l-balla?}\)
   ‘Like uh like balla?’

   D-I\(_1\): \(\text{ʔaʔiš l-uziy la-uzu iy-}
   \(\text{fi: la-raaml fi: ylaˁab fi: \(\text{ʔiši:}\)}\)
   ‘like like like they play with thing for-sand there yʔani:
   like
   ‘like like like they play with the thing for the sand like’
yeah that the-beach there this its-name shovel

fahimtak?
you understood
‘yeah at the beach there’ s this thing it’ s called balla you understand?

‘Yes balla.’

Semantic negotiations between participants extended beyond dialectal differences. Many lexical items were negotiated because of participants’ different levels of fluency. Often times, when a seemingly more fluent AHS uttered a term that is understood across the Arab World, their less-fluent partners initiated negotiation. This happened in cross-dialectal and same-dialect interactions in both locations.

13) G-P/J: ẗayyib

mitl-ha
like-it

w
and

fo:kit-ha

fi:
there

shaġlet
thing

l-ʔalim
the-world

kul-ha
all-it

[ok]

miš
NEG
‘arif
know

ki:f
how

l-ʔism
the-name

fi-l-ʔarabi:
in-the-arabic

NEG

wa

jamb-ha

and

next-it

naba:t
plant

‘Ok like that and above it there is . . a thing of all of the world [ok] I don’t know what it’s called in Arabic. and next to it . there is . a plant.’

G-L: shu:-hu

what-it

‘What is naba:t?’

G-P/J: naba:t

plant

zeiy
like

šaţara
tree

ya’ni:
meaning

shaţara

‘a-t-ṭawle
on-the-table

ṭawle

ʔism-ha

ṭawle

table

name-her

table

ṭayyib

ʔism-ha

ṭawle
A plant is like a tree meaning a tree on the table it's called a table. ok it's called a table.

In example (13), Participant G-P/J: was the more fluent participant throughout this task. She instructs her partner, Participant G-L₁, that there is a plant on a table in the picture. Participant G-L₁ was not familiar with this term or perhaps could not recall its meaning in the moment. Participant G-P/J then explains to her that nabaːt ‘plant’ is a tree that one puts on the table. Participant G-L₁ was then able to replicate the item. In this instance, Participant G-P/J also recalls the term for table in Arabic, ṭawle.

14) D-I₁: fi: um muqalla taːriːf muqalla? there um umbrella you.know umbrella
   ‘There is um an umbrella you know umbrella?’

   D-Y/M: uh-
   uh-
   ‘uh-’

   D-I₁: yaːni: tˤuːl tˤuːl l-maṭar
   meaning protection protection the-rain
   ‘It protects from the rain.’

   D-Y/M: ayyoua ayyoua yeah yeah
   ‘Yeah yeah.’

In (14), Participant D-I₁ is more fluent throughout this task as well and tends to accommodate to his partner who is mostly familiar with Moroccan Arabic. To accommodate, he uses the word muqalla ‘umbrella,’ a term used in MSA and familiar to most native speakers across the Arab World. However, Participant D-Y/M is not familiar with the term and so Participant D-I₁ explains to him that it is something that provides one with protection from the rain.

⁷ A dash immediately after a word signifies a change in speaker without a pause
Accommodation was another communication strategy that was used between participants to facilitate communication, namely when they were of different dialects or of different proficiency levels. Tables 6 and 7 show that Dearborn participants in cross-dialectal interactions were more likely to accommodate, although this typically occurred with participants who were more fluent. Often times, the more fluent the participant was in Arabic, the better he or she was able to accommodate to a partner of a differing heritage dialect or proficiency level.

15) G-T: w wara:-hum fi: binit ‘a-l-ysa:r [ok] w fi: walad ‘a-l-ymi:n and behind-them there girl on-the-left [ok] and there boy on-the-right ‘And behind them there is a girl on the left and there is a boy on the right.’

In (15), Participant G-T has frequent contact with speakers of other Arabic dialects and is part of some cultural organizations on campus which enables contact with other varieties. In addition, she takes MSA classes in college, allowing her to use MSA as a lexical resource when accommodating to other speakers. Her partner, Participant G-L₁, does not have frequent contact with other varieties and her use of Arabic is more restricted to the home. Participant G-T had originally began this activity using the words wila:ya ‘girl’ and şbi: ‘boy.’ After hearing her partner use binit ‘girl’ and walad ‘boy,’ she changed her language choice to that of the terms used by her partner.

16) D-E: w kulu-hum ma‘-hum te:bl şaḥ and all-them with-them table right ‘and all of them have a table right?’

D-Y₁: kulu-hum m‘a-hum te:bl all-them with-them table ‘All of them have a table.’

17) D-E: wait wait so ‘andak -/l-uh/-8 . l-tarabe:za l-te:bl wait wait so you-have -/the-uh/- the-table the-table (unintelligible) l-walad fo:q-ha warda şaḥ (unintelligible) the-boy above-it flower right

8 -/word/- signifies a false start
‘Wait wait so you have the uh the tarabe:za the table (unintelligible) the boy and above it the flower right?’

(16) and (17) demonstrate instances in which an Egyptian AHS accommodated to his Yemeni AHS partner through the use of the word te:bl. Participant D-E continued the use of this word throughout his interaction with Participant D-Y. However, in (17), Participant D-E uttered the word tarabe:za ‘table,’ which is commonly used in the Egyptian dialect. He then self-corrected to te:bl. After the session was over, he responded that he had been wanting to use the word tarabe:za to refer to the object, but used te:bl because of his partner’s language choice and to facilitate understanding.

7. DISCUSSION

The primary concern of this study is how AHS use Arabic when speaking to another AHS of a different dialect in a circumstance where English is not an option. It further investigated how living in different speech communities could influence communication in such circumstances. This section is dedicated to analysis of the data collected and is divided into four parts: 1) discussion of results and research questions, 2) limitations of the study, 3) further findings, and 4) directions for future research.

7.1 Discussion of results

The first research question explored whether AHS’ limited knowledge of their heritage dialect would affect their ability to understand and communicate with other varieties. In both locations, Gainesville and Dearborn, all participants had been exposed to other varieties of Arabic. Most of them had frequent contact with other varieties through cultural organizations on campus where they could mingle with AHS of different dialects and codeswitch between Arabic and English. In Gainesville, there was one participant, Participant G-L, who reported barely
coming into contact with other varieties of Arabic other than Lebanese and only spoke Arabic in the home. This restricted her knowledge to her own heritage dialect. Similarly, another participant in Dearborn, Participant D-Y/M reported using Arabic at work at a local place of worship. He also reported being more fluent in Moroccan Arabic and understanding other dialects such as Iraqi and Lebanese. However, during the task, he had some difficulty with certain lexical items his partner, Participant D-I1, had uttered in accommodation to him. Both participants, G-L1 and DS-Y/M, mitigated these circumstances in their cross-dialectal interactions through negotiation and circumlocution, as shown in example (12), where Participant DS-Y/M negotiates the meaning of karak ‘shovel’ with his partner, and then relates it to a term found in his own heritage dialect balla ‘shovel.’ Similar measures were taken by other participants who were more fluent, although were not as acquainted with other dialects as native speaker counterparts, such as Participant G-T. This participant, although her use of Arabic does not extend as far as that of the Dearborn participants, was able to accommodate well to her partner, Participant G-L1, by resorting to MSA or terms that Participant G-L1 preferred to use. Despite her ability to accommodate well to her partner, there was an instance of misunderstanding as a result of a linguistic barrier, which they tried to resolve through negotiation but failed.

18) G-T: šu: ʿalei-ha ma: fahimtik
   what on-it NEG I.understood.you
   ‘what is on it I didn’t understand you.’

G-L1: fi: ʿalei-ha ʿa:be. yʿani: ʿa:be yʿani: ſa:ɡlet mdawra ʔilli:
   there on-it ball like ball means thing round that
   l-ʔuleːd byaʿalabu: fi:ha
   the-kids play with-it
   ‘There’s a ball on it. like ball means. a round thing that kids play with.’

G-T: mm ʃtub
   mm ʃtub
‘Mm stub?’

G-L1: um ma: ba'rif l-kilme
       um NEG I-know the-word
‘Um I don’t know the word.’

G-T: ?illi: (unintelligible) bi-ramal
       that (unintelligible) in-sand
‘That which (unintelligible) in the sand?’

       no no . there this .the-kids like always play with.it in in uh . in-the .
       futbol
       football

G-T: mmm
       mmm
‘Mmm.’

G-L1: fahimt ‘aleiyi: I.understood on-you
       ‘I understood you.’

G-T: (unintelligible)

G-L1: hiyye ta:be bas hayy ha:da ta:be (unintelligible) ba'hr
       it ball but this this ball (unintelligible) ocean
‘That’s a ball but this this ball (unintelligible) ocean.’

G-T: ta:be y'ani: ta:wila
       ball means table
‘Ball means table?’

G-L1: la? ta:be šegle mdawra l-?ule:d dayman bya'alabu
       no ball thing round the-kids always play
       fi:ha with.it
‘No a ball is a round thing that kids always play with.’

G-T: oh ?illi: byimši: bi-r-raml
       oh that goes in-the-sand
‘Oh that which goes in the sand?’

G-L1: ma: ba'rif
       NEG I-know
‘I don’t know.’
In (18), as previously stated, Participant G-T attempts to negotiate the meaning of *ṭaːbe* ‘ball’ with her partner but both fail to reach an agreement. They both move on to the next object. This interaction demonstrates that even heritage speakers that are more competent in cross-dialectal communication still have difficulty with foreign terms. Nevertheless, negotiation and circumlocution were the primary forms of resolving these conflicts when encountered, although not always successful.

Linguistic barriers that arose in cross-dialectal communications were often resolved by circumlocution and negotiation, but there was one interaction in which the speaker’s limited knowledge of Arabic prevented him from describing multiple objects in the classroom picture. Participant D-Y/M attempted to describe objects such as a bulletin board and a calendar, but could not retrieve the lexical items from his repertoire. This occurrence indicates that depending on the AHS’s level of proficiency, limited knowledge of Arabic in general could lead to a communicative breakdown. Furthermore, D-Y/M’s communicative breakdown confirms Salomone’s and Marsal’s (1997) statements on circumlocution: having the ability to circumlocute requires an individual to possess “linguistic competence” and “cognitive flexibility.” The former signifies that individuals must have a “lexical” and “grammatical” foundation in a language and the latter signifies the ability to consciously change “their language repertoire when needed.” A shortcoming in either of these two abilities could lead to a failure in communication.

The second research question investigated how AHS’ exposure to other varieties of colloquial Arabic affects their ability to understand and communicate with these varieties. Looking at Tables 6 and 7, accommodation was a significant part of AHS’ cross-dialectal communication if they were able to. Participants such as D-E and D-I₁ were able to navigate
through these tasks well by resorting to their knowledge of other dialects. D-E accommodated to Yemeni Arabic and to borrowed terms his partner uttered while D-I₁ resorted to other dialects such as Levantine and MSA. This facilitated communication between the two pairs greatly.

   ‘There is a ball on top of the rug.’

20) D-Y/M: ?ana ma: fahimt . fahimt l-ʔalwa:n bas ma:
    I NEG I.understood . I.understood the-colors but NEG
    fahimt ʔish ʔish l-ṭa:ba
    I.understood what what the-ball
    ‘I didn’t understand. I understood the colors but I didn’t understand what ṭa:ba is.’

D-I₁: ṭa:ba hiyya yaʔnî: kura . kura bas yaʔnî: kura miθl
      Ball it means ball . ball but means ball like
      l-
      ‘ṭa:ba’ it means ball . ball but means ball like the-

D-Y/M: oh oh fahimtak fahimtak
       oh oh I.understood.you I.understood.you
     ‘Oh oh I understand I understand.’

(19) demonstrates an example of how D-I₁ accommodated to D-Y/M by using the term fi: often used in Levantine Arabic to express the presence of an object. D-I₁ has frequent contact with speakers of Lebanese Arabic, therefore Levantine Arabic and some MSA knowledge facilitated accommodation for him. In his Iraqi heritage dialect, the term ʔaku: expresses existentiality, which he employed in a same dialect interaction afterwards as opposed to fi:, as shown in Example (6). In (20), he uses the word ṭa:ba ‘ball,’ which D-Y/M is not familiar with. After D-Y/M initiates negotiation, D-I₁ defines it as kura ‘ball,’ a term found both in MSA and many other dialects of the Arab World such as Moroccan Arabic, his partner’s preferred heritage dialect.
Similarly, other participants in Gainesville with frequent exposure to other varieties were able to accommodate to their partners, as in (15) between G-T and G-L1. Nevertheless, the two cross-dialectal sessions that took place in Dearborn had more instances of accommodation combined than the three cross-dialectal sessions that took place in Gainesville.

Third, the question of whether formal education in MSA helps AHS’ ability to understand and communicate with other varieties is observed in this study. Gainesville had three out seven participants who had been instructed in MSA, while Dearborn had six out of eight. In Gainesville, the speaker who made the most use out of their knowledge of MSA was Participant G-T, who often resorted to her knowledge of MSA to retrieve certain lexical items. In Dearborn, participants in cross-dialectal interactions often resorted to other varieties of colloquial Arabic, such as Yemeni or Levantine. Participant D-I1 made the most use of his knowledge of MSA, as seen in example (14) with his marked choice for muḍalla ‘umbrella’ as opposed to shamsiyye ‘umbrella,’ which he had used in a later same-dialect interaction. Although not all participants who had formal instruction in MSA resorted much to the variety in this study, it certainly was a lexical resource when there was no other available option.

AHS’ use of borrowing was especially interesting given that the occurrences were more frequent in Dearborn. Four out of the five sessions in Dearborn made use of borrowing while only one session in Gainesville had resorted to borrowing from English. It cannot be concluded that speakers in unstable speech communities such as that of Gainesville borrow less from English, but it can be argued that speakers in stable speech communities such as Dearborn may feel more comfortable using these terms when asked to strictly speak Arabic. Rouchdy (2013) had reported that borrowing from English was a common part of Arab-American speech in Arab communities, with terms such as fakkas ‘to fix’ and ak-kar ‘the car.’ In addition, Rouchdy
concluded that when Arabic and English come into contact, new forms arise as a result of language interference, and that speakers in such communities begin to develop a new dialect of Arabic that others native speakers in the Arab World are not capable of understanding. Perhaps the cohesion of Arab communities in Dearborn and the wide acceptance of borrowing from English throughout the community allow AHS to feel more comfortable using these novel forms, considering that it is part of their dialect and language experience.

My final research question explored whether the stability of a speech community affected how AHS would perform in cross-dialectal interactions. Specifically, I was interested in observing whether AHS in Dearborn would have more cross-dialectal competence than those in Gainesville. Given the data, speakers in cross-dialectal situations managed to do well in such situations, however this was largely dependent on their level of proficiency. Regardless, given the two sessions in Dearborn and the three in Gainesville, most Dearborn participants in cross-dialectal interactions navigated through the tasks better than their Gainesville counterparts. This could in part be attributed to more foreign dialect exposure to facilitate understanding and accommodation in addition to their confidence in borrowing from English as an alternative.

7.2 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study, namely that of a small participant pool size and an uneven number of cross-dialectal interactions. This study aims to offer some insight into the cross-dialectal competence of AHS in the United States. The results to my research questions are not conclusive; rather, they bring new topics to consider in the area of Arabic sociolinguistics in the American diaspora. Due to time constraints, I was not able to recruit a third cross-dialectal session in Dearborn, which would have been ideal to equally compare to the occurrences in Gainesville. Regardless of these limitations, I retrieved a significant amount of data that offers
insight into heritage speaker speech and language behavior that went beyond the research questions explored.

7.3 Other observations

Other observations in this study go beyond the scope of subjects’ cross-dialectal competence. Some noteworthy occurrences took place across these interactions about language choice and behavior, namely that 1) speakers often helped each other with lexical items to facilitate understanding and communication and 2) those who participated multiple times were able to complete the task with better fluency each time.

The knowledge gap task required participants to share pieces of information that only one of them had at a given time to reach a common goal – produce a picture as accurately as possible given their partners’ instructions. However, proficiency level and dialectal differences imposed some challenges to achieve this goal. Liskin-Gasparro states that in “real-life” dialogues between native speakers and less fluent L2 speakers, native speakers tend to help less fluent L2 learners when they reach a communication barrier (1996). I observed some instances of more fluent participants helping each other linguistically in order to produce more precise descriptions.

21) G-L1: w ash-shamsiyye hiyye kma:n ʿanda mitl . and the-umbrella it also has like .

uh . . x xeːt mitl ʿanda heːkī . ma: baːrif
uh . . line like has this . NEG know

l-kilme
the-word
‘And the umbrella also has like . uh . . line like it has this . I don’t know the word.’

G-P/J: like xtuːt like lines
‘like lines?’

G-L1: xtuːt lines
‘Lines.’

G-P/J: l-ʔakθar
the-plural
min xaːʔ?

‘The plural of line?’

G-L1: ye
yeah
‘Yeah.’

In example (21), Participant G-P/J helps her partner with the plural form of xaːʔ ‘line’ in Arabic. This may have caused Participant G-L1 some difficulty because it is an irregular plural noun, xuːf ‘lines.’ Participant G-L1 tried to use this later in the same interaction, and again in her interactions with Participant G-T. However, she could not recall the word accurately as in (22) below. Regardless, Participant G-T understood and replicated the object as G-L1 described.

22) G-L1: l-manshafe ţeyye kmaːn um . ūːu: ḥismu
The-towel is also um . what its.name

. . ţanda xuːf* xeːʔ bas miːš ‘aʃuːl -l/- maː baʃ rif
. . it.has lines line but not horizontally NEG I.know
‘The towel is also um . what’s it’s name . . it has xuːf line but not horizontally I don’t know.’

There were some more successful instances of helping which allowed participants to retain new information and use it again in the interaction or even in another interaction. This was the case of Participant G-L1 who learned the word burtuqaːli ‘orange’ from Participant G-P/J and used it later in the session.

23) G-P/J: ţayyib l-karaːs li-hum makaʃadim ʕalei-hum -l/-maː-
ok the-chairs to-them sitting on-them

burtukaːni:
orange
‘Ok the chairs they are sitting on are orange.’

G-L1: shuː-hu
what-it
ha-l-loːn
this-the-color
‘What is this color?’

G-P/J: zeiy shaqli li-taqli-ha ku:n fawa:ki miš
like thing to-fry-it be fruit not

tufa:ha apple bas daʔiman ku:n jamb-a t-tufaha
apple but always be next-her the-apple

‘Like it’s a thing that you fry it’s a fruit not an apple but always next to the apple.’

G-L1: aha aha aha xalas xalas ʕarifti
yes yes yes ok ok I.understand

‘Yes yes yes ok I understand.’

G-P/J: ?inti: šufti kul ha-l-lo:n
you saw all this-the-color

‘You have seen this color.’

GS: yaʕani: yaʕni: bi-libna:n byʔuːlu oraːnːž
like like in-Lebanon they.say oraːnːž

‘Like like in Lebanon they say oraːnːž.’

In (23), Participant G-L1 is first introduced to burtuqaːli ‘orange’ through negotiation by her partner Participant G-P/J. G-P/J relates the term to a fruit that one can fry and is close to an apple. G-L1 states that she understands and then relates the term to oraːnːž, the term that is often used in Lebanon. Later in the interaction, she makes use of the term herself as in (24).

24) G-L1: w l-burtukaːn
and the-orange

‘And the orange color.’

G-P/J: rah ttaʕalm l-falastiːniyya
FUT you.learn the-Palestinian

‘You will learn Palestinian.’

G-L1: ʕam btaʕalm
PROG I.learn

‘I’m learning.’

Although Participant G-L1 used the term differently than she had initially heard it, her partner understood and joked with her that she would learn Palestinian Arabic. G-L1 then joked
back that she’s learning. Finally, in G-L1’s final session, she uses the term as she originally heard it with her partner Participant G-T (25).

    and last color color the-orange
    ‘and the last color is the color orange.’

G-L1’s participation in this task was especially important to this study because she participated three times. Although by the third session she had an idea of what the picture may have looked like, she continued to negotiate new terms and still continued to use circumlocution for objects whose names she did not know, such as ‘shovel’ and ‘castle.’ Her participation revealed how cross-dialectal interactions could benefit AHS in acquiring new lexical terms and with continued exposure, how their use of Arabic could improve. In the first task, she resorted to circumlocution for six terms while in the third task, only four. Additionally, she had learned new terms such as burtuqa:li ‘orange’ and xṭuːṭ ‘lines.’

Although participants tended to be more fluent when they repeated the task, the extent to which they retained new information is not clear. While Participant G-L1 retained terms such as burtuqa:li ‘orange,’ other terms were not as easily retained. In Example (11), Participant G-P/J asks if ťaːbe ‘ball’ is another word for kura ‘ball.’ Participant G-L1 confirms and they continue working together throughout the task. Later in her interaction with Participant G-T, G-L1 does not recall kura, which, had she used this term as opposed to ťaːbe, G-K would have understood. After their trial, which was G-L1’s last session, I asked G-L1 if she had heard the term kura before and she denied despite having confirmed it with Participant G-P/J an hour before. Perhaps this was due to a misinterpretation or perhaps G-L1 simply forgot.

A similar occurrence happened in Dearborn, where Participant D-Y1 had began his trial with Participant D-E. D-Y1 tended to confuse relative directions in Arabic.
the.one on-left boy and on-the-left girl

‘The one on the left is a boy and the one on the left is a girl.’

the.one on-left you said the-girl on-left

bi-šme:l w bi-l-yassa:r nufṣ ʔiši:
on-left and on-the-right same thing

‘You said the girl is on the left on the left and on the left are the same thing.’

D-Y1: oh oh uh ʔilli: bi-šme:l bna:ya w ʔilli:
oh oh uh the.one on-left girl and the.one

bi-l-ymi:n wled on-the-right boy

‘Oh oh uh the one on the left is a girl and the one on the right is a boy.’

the.one on-left girl . and the.one on-on-the-left .

uh wle:d
uh . boy

‘The one on the left is a girl and the one on the left is a boy.’

Participant D-Y1 confuses the left and the right in example (26), where both šme:l and yassa:r both mean ‘left.’ Participant D-E then raises the issue to him and D-Y1 corrects himself.

The same occurrence happens in (27) with Participant D-Y2 about one hour after the initial interaction with Participant D-E. This shows that even though speakers may recognize their own linguistic errors, these errors may be fossilized and may take time to be corrected.

Participants in Dearborn did not have the opportunity to participate up to three times as G-L1 did due to time constraints, hence I was not able to observe as many similar occurrences and how those would differ from G-L1’s experience. Regardless, Participant G-L1 was an integral part of this study in observing how continued cross-dialectal exposure affects language change and choice.

7.4 Directions for future research
Moving forward, a similar study as the one I conducted would produce more conclusive results taking into consideration a number of factors, including participant pool size, analysis of other linguistic elements, and time space between trials.

First, a bigger participant pool size in each location would be more comprehensive and representative of the AHS population in the area. This could also lead to more cross-dialectal interactions to analyze speakers’ language behavior. Additionally, some participants should even be allowed to participate up to three times to observe how continued cross-dialectal exposure could shape their language behavior in each trial as happened with Participant G-L1.

Second, this study solely concentrated on lexicon rather than other linguistic elements such as phonology and syntax. Some instances of phonological accommodation occurred between cross-dialectal interactions in both locations, but they were not counted as instances of accommodation because the study primarily focused on lexical choice. Further analysis of elements such as phonology and syntax could yield further information on AHS’ language behavior beyond the realm of lexicon.

Last, the time space between trials is another procedural detail to take into consideration. Many participants often repeated trials within less than an hour of each other, meaning that they could easily retain new linguistic terms or easily forget them as well. Section 7.3 mentions how some participants were able to retain new lexical terms, such as in the case of Participant G-L1. For other participants, such as D-Y1, the same mistakes he made in his first interaction were repeated in the second interaction despite initial correction. These two participants repeated their trials within an hour of each other. On the other hand, another participant, G-E1, was able to retain lexical terms more than a week after her initial interaction with G-S. If participants repeat
trials with a larger time space in between, researchers could examine if there is a trend in which lexical terms participants tend to retain for longer periods of time and why.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine four questions about AHS’ cross-dialectal communications. It took into consideration factors such as limited knowledge of Arabic, exposure to other colloquial varieties and MSA, communication strategies that AHS employed to mitigate discrepancies, and how language behavior differed in different speech communities with differing degrees of language stability.

After careful analysis of the data, both Gainesville and Dearborn participants resorted to the same communicative strategies to mitigate dialectal and proficiency barriers. The adoption of these strategies occurred to different degrees in both cities. While Gainesville participants were more likely to use circumlocution and negotiation, Dearborn participants were more likely to borrow from English. Particularly in cross-dialectal interactions, Dearborn participants were able to avoid circumlocution through accommodation and borrowing, allowing them to save time and transmit more direct messages.

In reality, AHS in the United States usually address each other in English with some codeswitching to Arabic. However, requiring these participants to speak strictly in Arabic encouraged them to tap into their Arabic linguistic repertoire, which then allowed for analysis of their linguistic knowledge and behavior in such a situation where they could only speak Arabic. Situations in real life where AHS would be required to speak only in Arabic could take place in exchanges with native speakers who do not speak English, and therefore similar linguistic behavior that transpired in this study may reappear in interactions with native speakers.
Examining AHS cross-dialectal fluency is an area of sociolinguistic research that is understudied. To my knowledge, this is the first study to have AHS communicate with each other in a face-to-face setting strictly in Arabic. I believe this study will give further insight into the field of sociolinguistics by portraying how heritage language competence and cross-dialectal fluency varies according to one’s speech community. In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), findings in this study will expose the weak points of AHS cross-dialectal communication when English is not an option. Moreover, they have the potential to contribute to education reform specifically for AHS in the United States, which is an area of SLA receiving more attention due to heritage speakers’ unique capabilities, needs, and experiences with their heritage language. In essence, the findings discussed in this thesis are a stepping-stone into the analysis of AHS’ cross-dialectal communication and competence in different speech communities of the United States. Nevertheless, additional research is encouraged to investigate these phenomena and provide conclusive results to the field.
Bibliography


