

## **Arabic as a Heritage Language and the Ideologies of Shame and Blame**

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Maintaining heritage languages is contingent upon various factors such as language ideology (Guardado 2010), travel to parents' home countries (Park & Sarkar 2007), and interaction with extended family members (Ghimenton 2015; Melo-Pfeifer 2014), among others. To address the paucity of research that considers the impacts of sociolinguistic factors such as language ideology (Woolard 1998) on the maintenance of Arabic as a heritage language in the U.S. context, this study considers the importance of looking at micro-level and family connections in the home countries when studying heritage language maintenance and intergenerational transmission. Instead of examining language ideologies as stemming from the host society and informing parental decisions regarding their heritage language (Yazan & Ali 2018), this study describes the types and forms of ideologies experienced by mothers and their daughters as they interact with their extended family members during their visits to the parents' home countries, and the impacts of these ideologies on the mothers' practices and the daughters' heritage language development. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to address the intersections between language ideologies and Arabic heritage language maintenance. Since research shows that mothers are essential players in the development of their children's heritage language (Turjoman 2013), this study interviewed five Muslim Arabic speaking mothers who immigrated to the U.S. from Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan and their U.S-born daughters aged between 11-13 years old. The participants travel annually and bi-annually to their home countries which creates venues of exposure to extended families and their ideologies. The results from the mothers' interviews reveal that mothers were blamed by other family members on their children's lack of competence in Arabic. Moreover, feelings of embarrassment/shame formed during those critical social moments impacted mothers' linguistic and educational practices upon their return to the U.S. (i.e., enrolling children in Islamic schools, increasing Arabic language input). The daughters' interviews showed that their interactions with their extended family members during their visits left them confused on which language they should use/avoid as some of their encounters were asking for help improving the English of their interlocutors. Some participants reported that their experiences made them more determined to improve their Arabic skills. Other results suggest that visits to parents' home countries introduce children to conflicting ideologies that may impact their heritage language development. Overall, this study shows that the correlation between language ideologies and Arabic heritage language maintenance is complex and more empirical research is needed to expand this field.

## References

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