

Heritage Arabic eBook

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Title: Immigration and Emigration

Domain: This activity aims to develop students’ abilities to use language meaningfully in various communicative situations. It exercises the kinds of knowledge that heritage Arabic learners need in order to function in the contexts where they typically find themselves situated. Various abilities are necessary in these contexts: referring to oneself, to one’s immediate environment, to general interests or to education/work related matters are all language skills that are invoked in everyday communication.

This activity promotes critical dialect awareness—i.e. explicit knowledge about the contexts in which specific registers (formal or informal) and varieties (MSA, “dialect,” more local variants, inter-dialectal communication) are used—a skill that is necessary if heritage Arabic learners are to function at a high level of literacy. The activity also aids in Vocabulary Expansion, enriching the language learner’s vocabulary by initiating interactions in which new words can be tried out and understood. Heritage learners’ knowledge of vocabulary can be considerably different from that of non-heritage learners. Unlike non-heritage learners, HLs often have a more extensive knowledge of vocabulary in their dialects than in MSA. Yet, their familiarity with a home or community dialect can help build a strong vocabulary in MSA, due to the significant similarity between the two forms.

Modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretative and Presentational

Proficiency/Performance range: Intermediate to Advanced

Objectives:

- (1) Students will develop their vocabularies on a variety of topics by relating them to their own experiences.
- (2) Students will research literacy practices in their own communities.
- (3) Students will practice four stages of reading—quick scanning, planning next reading, reading for comprehension, and close reading—in preparation for higher performance levels.
- (4) Students will practice their public speaking skills in Arabic through authentic communication events in their own communities.
- (5) Students will strive to produce written text types at higher performance/proficiency levels.

Pre-class Preparation for Instructors:

1. Find 3-4 different articles and/or news reports in Arabic on migration within and/or from the Middle East and North Africa region (click [here](#) for our suggestions on where to find appropriate articles). Print copies of each article for students to read at home.
2. Before conducting the in-class activity below, put students into small groups, assigning each group a different article to read.
3. Provide 2-3 comprehension questions for each article.

Step One: AT HOME

1. Students should be instructed to read in four stages—quick scanning, planning next reading, reading for comprehension, close reading. These stages encourage the student to move from a global to a highly-focused approach to any given text, which is something many of us do automatically when reading in a language we are very comfortable with. Here we just break reading down into its component parts. This strategy, which we use at Hunter College, aims to build confidence and self-reliance in students, and encourages them to focus on the grammar and vocabulary that they *do* know, rather than on that which they don't know. The goal is not to understand every single word but rather to develop skills in overall comprehension that can be brought to varied and sometimes unfamiliar reading texts.
2. Have students write a summary of the article that they've been assigned addressing the comprehension questions associated with that article. Students whose writing abilities peak at sentence generation should provide 4-5 sentences on what they understood about the article. Students currently writing at the paragraph level should write a 1-2 paragraph summary.

Step Two: IN CLASS

1. *Reading Discussion.* Arrange students in groups according to the articles they have read at home.
2. Based on the comprehension questions provided, have the students discuss in Arabic their responses to the questions.
3. During group discussion, have students identify five key words which they think are essential for understanding the article and then write them on the board.
4. As a class, go through each key word, asking students to provide a model sentence orally for each. Have students write down each word, informing them that the words will be used for future vocabulary quizzes (and stressing that these words are now 'active vocabulary').

Step Three: IN CLASS (Survey Writing)

1. In small groups, have students brainstorm a list of questions that they might ask an immigrant about his/her motivations, family history of migration, challenges faced, and so on.

Some questions might include:

- (1) When did your family emigrate to the US?
- (2) What was the most important reason for your family's migration:
 - a. Job opportunities
 - b. Fleeing war
 - c. Education
 - d. Other _____
2. Come together as a class and have each group write two of their questions on the board. Then, have students walk around the room correcting the spelling and grammar of the other groups' questions, with the instructor's help. Check for comprehension, either by asking the students to translate the questions into English or by asking them comprehension questions in Arabic.

3. Document these questions for the students' future reference. You can do this by taking a picture of the questions and sending it to students via email or having the students write the questions into their notebooks.
4. Prepare students for their upcoming interviews using these questions. The interviews should be conducted in Arabic, with the variety of Arabic left up to the students' discretion. This is a good time to discuss the different contexts in which Arabic registers are used. For example, you might want to show a clip of an Al-Jazeera or Sky News Arabic interview on the [current refugee crisis in Europe](#), or [US immigration policy](#). Ask students to reflect on the Arabic used in this clip: Is it formal or informal? How can they tell? Explain that they should consider the context when choosing which register of Arabic to use: If it is a formal interview, MSA is often used; If it is an informal conversation, their regional dialect might be better.

Step Four: AT HOME

1. Have students conduct interviews with an Arabic-speaking family/community member, friend, and/or classmate using the questions discussed in class (interviews can be in person or through online communication platforms such as Skype/FaceTime/Messenger/etc.). The interview should cover all the questions discussed in class as well as whatever else the interviewer would like to ask.
2. Interviews should be audio- or video-recorded and posted to the class Facebook page, or otherwise made available to the class.

Step Five: IN CLASS

1. In small groups, have the students discuss in Arabic some of the recurring themes and challenges that emerged during the interviews. Have each group make a list of the key words and phrases that best summarize these themes and then write them on the board. Finally, have each group read the key words written by the other groups.
2. Choose a few of the interviews to screen in class and discuss. Ask students about the common themes written on the board that are addressed in each interview. Encourage students to respond in full sentences when possible.
3. *Debrief:* In English (or Arabic if the students' proficiency is advanced), ask students to comment on what they learned from the interviews. Possible topics for conversation might include particularly moving stories or noteworthy linguistic features (e.g., movement between Modern Standard and spoken Arabic, code-switching, etc.) that they encountered during the interviews. Another potential topic for class discussion is the challenges of immigration discourse in today's political climate or the perception gap across generations related to "migration."