



Use of Heritage Language in Immigrant Families to Strengthen Family Relationships and Ethnic Identities of Adolescents: The Case of Arab Immigrants

Dr. Vimala Venugopal Muthuswamy*^{ID}

*School of Business, Department of Management,
King Faisal University, Al hasa 31982, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Email: fmuthuswamy@kfu.edu.sa*

Received 27 June 2023 | Received in revised form 13 August 2023 | Accepted 25 October 2023

APA Citation:

Muthuswamy, V. V. (2023). Use of Heritage Language in Immigrant Families to Strengthen Family Relationships and Ethnic Identities of Adolescents: The Case of Arab Immigrants. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 106-117. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.902009>

Abstract

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of heritage language usage among adolescents from immigrant families on the enhancement of family bonds and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants. In order to accomplish the stated objective, a total of 321 expatriates and their respective families residing in Saudi Arabia were surveyed, and quantitative data was collected. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Regression analysis was employed to examine direct relationships, while moderation analysis was conducted using the Hayes Process Macro. The findings of the analysis indicated that the utilisation of heritage language among adolescents from immigrant backgrounds led to enhanced familial relationships, encompassing both family cohesion and family discussion. Additionally, it was discovered that the presence of parental warmth played a crucial role in influencing the relationship between the utilisation of heritage language and familial dynamics, specifically in terms of promoting family cohesion and facilitating open discussions within the family unit. In addition to this, the use of heritage languages also exerted a substantial impact on the degree of affiliation with the ethnic identity of immigrants. This study makes a noteworthy contribution to the existing body of literature, as research on Arabic as a heritage language and Arab immigrants is still in its early stages and therefore limited. Consequently, there is a need for further exploration and reflection by scholars in this area. Thus, this research adds to the existing literature. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that there is a dearth of prior research examining the utilisation of the Arabic language and its influence on familial dynamics and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants. Consequently, this study holds substantial value as it adds to the existing scholarly discourse in this field.

© 2023 EJAL & the Authors. Published by Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics (EJAL). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY-NC-ND) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Keywords: Heritage language, ethnic identity, family relationships, parental warmth, immigrant families

1. Introduction

Language serves as a means of communication that facilitates human beings' integration into specific social, cultural, or ethnic communities characterised by shared linguistic practises. Individuals who share a common language are not burdened with the need for extensive calculation and cognitive effort prior to verbal communication, as they possess the assurance that their intended message will be comprehended in the

* Corresponding Author.

Email: fmuthuswamy@kfu.edu.sa

<http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.902009>

intended sense and meaning “The languages we speak index, shape and redefine our ethnocultural identity” (Tseng, 2020). However, as a result of heightened globalisation and subsequent global mobility, a significant number of individuals have become immigrants residing in distant lands, opting to establish themselves in entirely unfamiliar territories characterised by disparate cultural and societal norms. This decision is driven by their pursuit of improved prospects for both their own well-being and that of subsequent generations. The process of assimilation and adjustment to the cultural and normative framework of the host country presents significant challenges for immigrant families.

On one hand, they strive to integrate into the new society and conform to its expectations. On the other hand, they are reluctant to relinquish their own cultural values, traditions, and norms that have shaped their lives thus far. Moreover, they aspire to pass down these cultural heritages and identities to their children, ensuring the preservation of their cultural legacy (Park, 2022). The offspring of immigrant families, particularly those in their early stages of development, are consistently exposed to the dominant language of the host country. This exposure primarily occurs through their attendance at educational institutions and interactions with their peers. Consequently, parents exert additional endeavours to ensure that their offspring acquire and preserve the heritage language, namely the language associated with their country of origin. In terms of definition, a learner of heritage language is an individual “who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken or merely understands the heritage language and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdés, 2005).

Moreover, another definition has been provided by Montrul (2010) who defined heritage language learners as the “speakers of ethnolinguistically minority languages who were exposed to the language in the family since childhood and as adults wish to learn, relearn, or improve their current level of linguistic proficiency in their family language.” (p. 3). In turn, individuals who engage in the acquisition of a heritage language are predominantly bilinguals who have attained fluency in the dominant language, yet possess a desire to acquire their heritage language in order to establish a sense of familial connection and enhance interpersonal relationships. This pursuit enables improved communication with relatives and serves as a means of fostering a connection with the ethnic community residing in the host nation (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021; Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023; Leyendecker et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022).

Parents immigrate to the host country during their adult years, bringing with them established cultural norms and beliefs and a proficient command of their native language. This poses a challenge for individuals to acquire comprehensive fluency in the language of the host nation. However, it has been observed that young children possess a remarkable ability to acquire language skills rapidly, enabling them to readily embrace the dominant language of their surroundings and attain a higher level of proficiency in it compared to their ancestral language. This phenomenon gives rise to a communication gap and barrier between children and their parents, as both parties encounter difficulties in effectively expressing their thoughts, emotions, and sentiments owing to the presence of a language barrier. Hence, the offspring of immigrant households who actively endeavour to acquire and preserve their ancestral language are inclined to exhibit enhanced communication with their parents, consequently fostering improved overall familial relationships (Pułaczewska, 2019; Valdez, 2023).

The primary objective of this research is to examine the utilisation of heritage language among adolescents from Arab immigrant households and its impact on the overall quality of their familial relationships, specifically in terms of family cohesion and family discussion. Family cohesion refers to the prevailing atmosphere within the household when all family members are present and the extent to which they enjoy spending time together (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023). In contrast, the concept of family discussion pertains to the extent and nature of subjects that family members are at ease discussing amongst themselves, as well as the degree of openness with which they engage in discourse on various topics (Oh & Fuligni, 2010). In addition, the current study expands on Kilpi-Jakonen and Kwon (2023) research by looking into the moderating effect of parental warmth. Parental warmth refers to the favourable emotional conduct exhibited by parents towards their children, encompassing an environment characterised by affection, encouragement, and a sense of security that fosters open communication (Park, Tsai, Liu, & Lau, 2012).

Generally, the strength of the association between heritage language and family relationships is positively correlated with the extent to which children perceive comfort, respect, support, and love, or warmth, from their parents. Furthermore, this study examines the significance of heritage language in the preservation of ethnic identity among Arab immigrant families. The acquisition and preservation of the heritage language among immigrants engenders a sense of belonging to a larger ethnic community, thereby ensuring a continuous connection to their cultural origins and mitigating feelings of displacement in an unfamiliar environment (Shen & Jiang, 2021). Children who acquire a heritage language also have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with and engage in communication with other individuals from the same ethnic background who may have similarly migrated to the host nation. Hence, the heritage language serves as a means of establishing connections, facilitating communication, and fostering social networks among children. Consequently, it enables them to connect with individuals who share the same cultural background and ancestral origins (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021).

There has been a surge in scholarly inquiry regarding the correlation between heritage language and ethnic identity within immigrant families (Arredondo, Rosado, & Satterfield, 2016; Balidemaj & Small, 2019; Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021; Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020; Mu, 2015; Schroeder, Lam, & Marian, 2015; Shen & Jiang, 2021). However, the scholarly attention dedicated to investigating the utilisation and preservation of heritage languages among Arab immigrants remains limited, as evidenced by the scant number of studies conducted on this topic (Mohammed, 2022; Visonà & Plonsky, 2019). The primary objective of this study is to examine the utilisation of Arabic as a heritage language within the context of Arab immigrants, with a specific emphasis on adolescents. This age group is particularly significant as they are in a critical period for language acquisition and are consistently exposed to both their heritage language within their households and the majority language within their educational institutions.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of heritage language utilisation on the calibre of familial connections and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants who have relocated to different regions across the globe. This study makes a substantial contribution to the existing literature, as research on Arabic as a heritage language and Arab immigrants is still in its early stages and therefore limited. Consequently, there is a need for additional investigation and reflection by scholars in this area. Thus, the present research adds to the body of literature on this topic. Furthermore, a dearth of prior research exists regarding the utilisation of the Arabic language and its influence on familial dynamics and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants. Consequently, this study holds substantial value as it contributes to the existing scholarly literature in this domain.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Heritage Language Use

The term "heritage language" was introduced to describe individuals who are the offspring of immigrant parents and were either born or arrived in the host country during their early childhood. In this manner, individuals acquire proficiency in two languages, thereby attaining bilingualism. One language pertains to the familial or heritage language, which is the native language inherited from their parents and spoken at home. The second language corresponds to the majority language, which is either the language spoken by their parents to others or the language learned in educational institutions (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021; Montrul, 2012). It is possible for children to acquire proficiency in both languages simultaneously, meaning they develop fluency in their heritage language as well as the dominant language from an early age. In this particular scenario, individuals are referred to as simultaneous bilinguals.

Conversely, individuals who acquire their heritage language from birth and subsequently acquire the majority language, often through formal education, are referred to as sequential bilinguals. A shared characteristic observed among both simultaneous bilinguals and sequential bilinguals is the gradual decline in proficiency in their heritage language as they transition into adulthood. This phenomenon is further accentuated with each subsequent generation, as a greater emphasis is placed on the dominant language of the majority (Cunningham, 2020; Yakushkina, 2021). There has been an ongoing discourse surrounding the potential advantages of utilising heritage language for immigrant children in their process of acculturation within the host country.

There exist two perspectives on this matter, one being the conventional assimilation theory which posits that the utilisation of the heritage language by immigrant children impedes their process of adaptation due to their limited acquisition of proficiency in the dominant language (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023). The second perspective in this context pertains to the segmented assimilation theory, which posits that the acquisition or preservation of one's heritage language is advantageous for the adaptation of immigrant children. This is attributed to the enhanced ability to communicate with family members and establish connections within the ethnic community residing in the host nation (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023; Leyendecker et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022).

In recent times, several research investigations have centered their attention on the utilization of heritage languages by immigrant populations across diverse settings. These contexts include studies on New Zealand's Korean immigrants (Park, 2022), immigrant communities in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK and their heritage language practices (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023), Turkish immigrants residing in the Netherlands (Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018), Chinese immigrants in Australia (Shen & Jiang, 2021), Chinese immigrants in the United States (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021), as well as Japanese and Korean immigrants in the United States (Kwon, 2017; Lee & Gupta, 2020), there are a lot of Greek immigrants in Western Canada, according to a recent study by (Daskalaki, Blom, Chondrogianni, & Paradis, 2020).

However, there has been a growing body of research investigating the utilisation and preservation of heritage languages among Arab immigrants (Mohammed, 2022; Visonà & Plonsky, 2019). This study primarily examines the utilisation of Arabic as a heritage language within the context of Arab immigrants,

with a specific emphasis on adolescents. This age group is particularly relevant due to their developmental stage, during which they are exposed to both their heritage language within the home environment and the majority language within educational institutions. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of heritage language utilisation on the calibre of familial connections and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants who have relocated to different regions across the globe. This study holds significance in its contribution to the existing body of literature, as research on Arabic as a heritage language and Arab immigrants is still in its early stages and therefore limited.

Consequently, there is a need for further investigation and additional research in this area. Thus, this study makes a valuable contribution to the literature. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that prior research on the utilisation of the Arabic language and its influence on familial dynamics and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants is lacking. Consequently, this study holds substantial importance as it adds to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

2.2 Family Relationship

Immigrant families encounter distinct challenges and difficulties that are specific to their circumstances. Numerous immigrant families opt to accompany their young children during the migration process, thereby exposing them to the cultural, normative, valuative, and linguistic aspects of the host country during their formative years, which coincide with the optimal period for acquiring knowledge and skills. Therefore, it can be observed that in certain instances, exposure to the cultural and normative aspects of the host country results in a sense of detachment or disparity between parents and their offspring during the process of maturation (Foner & Dreby, 2011). Parents often find themselves in a complex predicament whereby they desire their children to integrate into the host country in order to thrive in the unfamiliar surroundings. Simultaneously, they also hold the expectation that their children will uphold the cultural values, traditions, norms, and heritage language of their home country (Kalmijn, 2019). Language plays a crucial role in maintaining children's connection to their cultural heritage.

However, it is often observed that children undergo a complete transition towards the language of the host country as a result of its increased prevalence in educational institutions, interactions with peers, and social circles. In instances of this nature, a phenomenon of alienation commences to emerge among the members of the familial unit, whereby the parents maintain a profound attachment to their cultural heritage while the offspring experience a sense of disconnection (Kalmijn, 2019). Frequently, parents who engage in migration acquire proficiency in the language of the host country during adulthood, despite having predominantly used their native language in their country of origin throughout their lives. This implies that parents do not attain a level of language proficiency in the majority language that is equivalent to that of native speakers (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Therefore, children who are of school age and are exposed to the majority language through their educational institutions demonstrate a high level of fluency in the majority language. This phenomenon gives rise to a divide between parents and children, wherein parents encounter difficulties in effectively conveying their thoughts and emotions to their children in the dominant language that the latter are proficient in. Consequently, a language barrier emerges within the familial setting, leading to increased tension and distance in the parent-child relationship (Leyendecker et al., 2018; Müller et al., 2020). The presence of a language barrier poses challenges to effective communication, leading to avoidable conflicts that could have been resolved through clear and comprehensive dialogue (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of heritage language in preserving familial connections (De Houwer, 2017). Hence, parents who actively ensure that their children acquire or maintain proficiency in their heritage language, in addition to the dominant language, tend to experience stronger familial bonds and enhanced overall family relationships. This is attributed to the fact that both parents and children are able to effectively communicate with each other in a manner that is mutually comprehensible and coherent. The absence of confusion or discrepancies prevents hindrances and thus facilitates open and clear communication, thereby improving the quality of familial relationships.

Current research has also demonstrated that children who utilise their heritage language within their household exhibit enhanced mental health and overall well-being. This can primarily be attributed to the reduced presence of familial tension and the facilitation of open and effective communication among family members (Delaruelle et al., 2021; Kunst, 2021; Meca, Schwartz, Martinez, & McClure, 2019; Mood, Jonsson, & Låftman, 2016; Müller et al., 2020). Prior studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between the utilisation of heritage languages and enhanced familial dynamics within immigrant households (Pułaczewska, 2019; Valdez, 2023). This study examines the quality of family relationships by considering two dimensions: family cohesion and family discussion. Family cohesion refers to the overall atmosphere within the household when all family members are present, as well as the extent to which family members enjoy spending time together (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023).

In contrast, the concept of family discussion pertains to the extent and nature of subjects that family members are at ease engaging in with one another, as well as the degree of openness with which they are able to address a range of topics (Oh & Fuligni, 2010). Building on the theoretical foundation put forth by Kilpi-Jakonen and Kwon (2023), the current study also examines the moderating impact of parental warmth. Parental warmth refers to the manifestation of positive affective behaviours exhibited by parents towards their children, creating an environment characterised by love, support, and a sense of safety that encourages open communication (Park, Tsai, Liu, & Lau, 2012). The strength of the association between heritage language and family relationships is positively correlated with the extent to which children experience comfort, respect, support, and love, commonly referred to as warmth, from their parents.

Thus, based on the above arguments, this study proposes the following hypotheses,

H1: *The use of heritage language among members of Arab immigrant families is positively linked with family cohesion.*

H2: *The use of heritage language among members of Arab immigrant families is positively linked with family discussion.*

H3: *Parental warmth moderates the relationship between the use of heritage language among members of Arab immigrant families and family cohesion.*

H4: *Parental warmth moderates the relationship between the use of heritage language among members of Arab immigrant families and family discussion.*

2.3 Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity can be referred to as “a component of ‘awareness, self-labeling, attitude, and behavior’ that result in individuals’ identification with a particular group as well as the emotional attachment to that group” (Balidemaj & Small, 2019). It majorly comprises of five parts “(1) self-identification as a member of a particular ethnic group, (2) belonging and commitment to that group, (3) firm attitudes toward the group, (4), shared approaches and beliefs and (5) specific ethnic traditions and practices” (Balidemaj & Small, 2019). When individuals engage in immigration, their offspring are particularly exposed to a diverse array of cultures and ethnicities, encompassing both the cultural heritage of their country of origin and the cultural milieu of the receiving nation.

Therefore, it is not uncommon for these children to cultivate diverse identities, encompassing both their ethnic and national affiliations (Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020). Over the course of time, there exists a persistent possibility that offspring of immigrant parents may gradually lose connection with their ethnic heritage and become fully assimilated into the dominant national identity. However, under such circumstances, language plays a key role in reminding the immigrants about their roots and where they came from. “The languages we speak index, shape and redefine our ethnocultural identity” (Tseng, 2020). Maintaining a connection with the heritage language within the domestic sphere affords immigrants a sense of affiliation with a broader ethnic collective, a sentiment they hold in high regard and from which they derive their self-worth. The maintenance of a connection and sense of belonging to one's original ethnic group does not result in the loss of immigrants' position in society, as they consistently maintain a connection to their cultural heritage (Shen & Jiang, 2021).

When the offspring of immigrants acquire proficiency in both the dominant language and their heritage language, they gain exposure to and understanding of both cultures, thereby experiencing a sense of affiliation with both (Grosjean, 2019). The utilisation of heritage language aids individuals in the formation of an identity that is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of their parents (Wang et al., 2022). The maintenance of this ethnic identity facilitates a stronger familial connection, thereby yielding favourable consequences for the psychological well-being and overall welfare of immigrant children (Luthra, Nandi, & Benzeval, 2020).

Furthermore, the utilisation of heritage language serves to facilitate the establishment of connections and foster a sense of belonging among immigrant families sharing the same ethnic background in the receiving country, thereby engendering the formation of an ethnic community within an unfamiliar territory. Through the use of heritage language, children are able to identify and acknowledge their peers who share the same ethnic background. Consequently, this recognition has the potential to foster the development of friendships among these individuals, primarily based on their shared ethnicity (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021). Proficiency in one's heritage language is also associated with enhanced familial bonds at an intergenerational level, as well as a sense of belonging to an ethnic minority group (Lee & Gupta, 2020). Parents hold the belief that exposing their children to bilingualism and biculturalism can enhance their networking capabilities, thereby increasing their access to educational and career prospects (Kwon, 2017).

Prior studies have provided empirical support for the correlation between the utilisation of heritage languages and the development of cultural or ethnic identification (Arredondo, Rosado, & Satterfield, 2016; Balidemaj & Small, 2019; Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021; Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020; Mu, 2015; Schroeder, Lam, & Marian, 2015; Shen & Jiang, 2021). Therefore, based on the above discussion

and evidence from the literature regarding the association of language, culture and identity, this study proposes the following hypothesis,

H5: *The use of heritage language among members of Arab immigrant families is positively linked with their ethnic identity.*

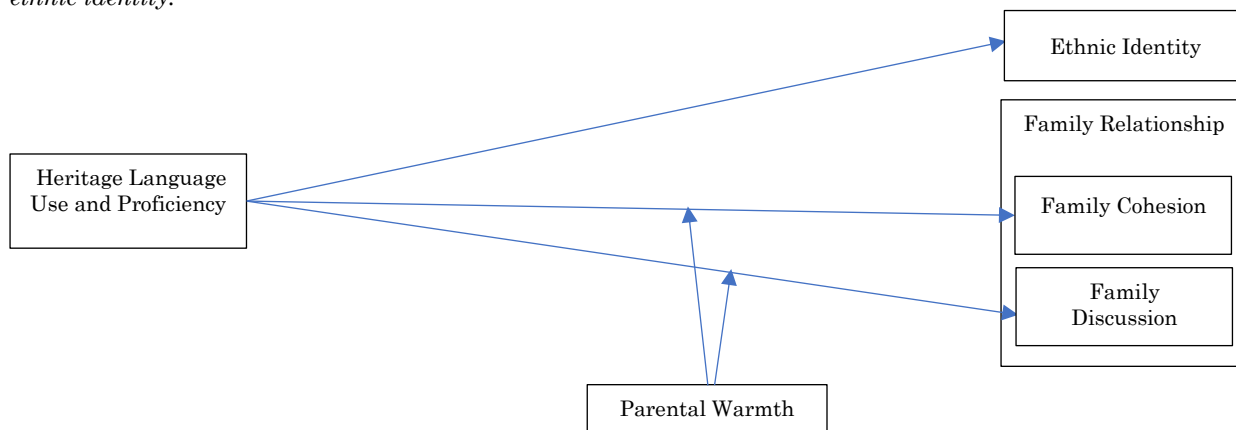


Figure 1. *Conceptual model of the Study*

3. Methodology

3.1 Measures

The study's variables were assessed using pre-existing measurement questionnaires that have been validated. The measurement scale utilised for assessing the variables of heritage language use and proficiency was derived from the research conducted by [Sevinç and Dewaele \(2018\)](#). Likewise, the measurement scales utilised for the variables of family cohesion and parental warmth were derived from the research conducted by [Kilpi-Jakonen and Kwon \(2023\)](#). Another measurement of the variable pertaining to family discussion was conducted by modifying the instrument developed by [Oh and Fuligni \(2010\)](#). The instrument used to assess the variable of ethnic identity in this study was derived from the works of [Douglass and Umaña-Taylor \(2015\)](#) as well as [Homma, Zumbo, Saewyc, and Wong \(2014\)](#). The measurement of all variables was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale. [Table 1](#) below presents the measurement items and statements for each variable, along with their respective sources.

Table 1. *Measurement Tools*

Items	References
Heritage Language Use and Proficiency (1 – Not well to 5 – Very well)	Sevinç and Dewaele (2018)
My ability to speak in Arabic is...	
If someone else is speaking Arabic, my ability to understand the language is...	
My ability to read in Arabic is...	
My ability to write in Arabic is...	Kilpi-Jakonen and Kwon (2023)
Family Cohesion (1- Almost Never to 5 Almost Always)	
We like to spend free time with each other	
We feel very close to each other	
We like to gather and sit in the same room	
It becomes tense when everyone is at home	
When we are together, the atmosphere is uneasy	Oh and Fuligni (2010)
We fight about small things	
Family Discussion (1 – Almost never to 5 – Almost always)	
I talk about my future job plans with my family	
I talk about my future educational plans with my family	Kilpi-Jakonen and Kwon (2023)
I talk about my activities and performance at school with my family	
Parental Warmth	
Whenever I feel sad, my parents try to comfort me	
My parents try to help me when I have a problem	
My parents show me that they love me	
My parents try to understand what I think and feel	
My parents often tell me to be quiet	
My parents are very strict with me even over small things	
My parents often criticize me	

Ethnic Identity	Douglass and Umaña-Taylor (2015) and Homma, Zumbo, Saewyc, and Wong (2014)
Affirmation	
My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly positive	
I feel positively about my ethnicity	
I wish I were of a different ethnicity	
I am happy with my ethnicity	
If I could choose, I would prefer to be of a different ethnicity	
I like my ethnicity	
Commitment	
I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group	
I understand what my ethnic group membership means to me	
I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group	
Exploration	
I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs	
I participated in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs	
I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group”	

3.2 Data Collection

The research focused on the expatriate population and their families currently residing in Saudi Arabia. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 321 respondents from the target population in Saudi Arabia, as there was no accessible or available record of expatriates and their families. The data was obtained through a self-administered survey, wherein respondents were given autonomy and sole responsibility to complete it without any influence or prejudice from the researcher. The respondents' participation in the survey was completely voluntary, and they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any given time. The participants were provided with the assurance that their data would solely be used for research purposes. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to examine direct relationships, regression analysis was employed, while moderation was assessed using the Hayes Process Macro.

4. Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The initial stage of the analysis process involves providing an overview or summary of the data using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics encompass key measures such as the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients that capture the characteristics and relationships between variables in the study. The table provided below displays the reliability statistics, specifically Cronbach's alpha, for all variables examined in the study. Cronbach's alpha values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70 show that all variables exhibit satisfactory reliability, according to the findings. This suggests that the variables demonstrate internal consistency and reliability. The correlation statistics indicate that there are low to moderate correlations among the variables, which does not pose a problem in relation to multicollinearity.

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	1	2	3	4	5
Heritage language use and proficiency	3.20	1.25	0.87	1				
Family cohesion	2.90	0.94	0.79	0.54	1			
Family discussion	2.68	0.36	0.71	0.32	0.15	1		
Parental warmth	3.01	0.88	0.76	0.18	0.19	0.25	1	
Ethnic identity	3.19	1.02	0.70	0.22	0.08	0.18	0.40	1

4.2. Testing of Hypotheses

Following the presentation of the descriptive statistics pertaining to the variables under investigation, the subsequent phase involves the examination and evaluation of the proposed hypotheses. In order to achieve this objective, a regression analysis was conducted to examine the presence of a linear relationship between variables. The initial relationship examined pertained to the association between heritage language and family cohesion. The following table displays the adjusted R square value of 0.52. This finding suggests that the presence of a heritage language accounts for approximately 56% of the variability observed in family cohesion. The obtained regression coefficient and its associated significance value provide empirical evidence supporting the existence of a positive relationship between the utilisation of heritage languages and the level of family cohesion.

This finding aligns with the first hypothesis (H1) posited in the present study. This implies that there is a positive correlation between the extent to which adolescents from Arab immigrant families utilise their heritage language within their household and the quality of their family relationships, specifically in terms of family cohesion. The utilisation of heritage language fosters familial cohesion, as it engenders a desire among family members to engage in shared activities and enjoy one another's presence.

Table 2. Regression Analysis (Heritage Language Use and Family Cohesion)

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.50
R ²					0.54
Adjusted R ²					0.52
Standard Error					0.26
Observations					321
ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significant F
Regression	15	38.12	8.38	52.39	8.6
Residual	85	12.23	0.21		
Total	100	50.35			
	Coefficients	SE	t value	P-value	
Constant	0.56	0.29	2.22	0.02	
Heritage Language Use	0.21	0.06	3.29	0.04	

P<0.05 (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007), t> 1.96 (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007)

The second relationship that was examined pertained to the association between the utilisation of heritage languages and the occurrence of family discussions. The following table presents the adjusted R square value, which is calculated to be 0.45. This finding suggests that the presence of a heritage language accounts for approximately 45% of the variability observed in family cohesion. The regression coefficient and the associated significance value have provided confirmation of the positive association between the utilisation of heritage language and the occurrence of family discussions, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 2 as posited in the study.

This implies that there is a positive correlation between the extent to which adolescents from Arab immigrant families utilise their heritage language within their household and the quality of their family relationships, specifically in relation to engaging in meaningful family discussions. The utilisation of heritage language facilitates open communication among children and their family members, allowing for discussions pertaining to future plans, desired career paths, educational aspirations, and daily school-related activities.

Table 3. Regression Analysis (Heritage Language Use and Family Discussion)

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.41
R ²					0.46
Adjusted R ²					0.45
Standard Error					0.31
Observations					321
ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significant F
Regression	11	33.98	9.01	43.97	6.5
Residual	89	9.64	0.35		
Total	100	43.62			
	Coefficients	SE	t value	P-value	
Constant	0.29	0.14	1.99	0.02	
Heritage Language Use	0.31	0.08	3.02	0.01	

The third relationship that was examined pertained to the association between the utilisation of heritage languages and the development of ethnic identity. The following table displays the adjusted R square value, which is calculated to be 0.39. This finding suggests that the presence of a heritage language accounts for approximately 39% of the variability observed in ethnic identity. The regression coefficient and associated significance value provide empirical evidence for the existence of a positive relationship between the utilisation of heritage language and engagement in family discussions, thus lending support to Hypothesis 5 as posited in the present study.

This implies that there is a positive correlation between the frequency of heritage language usage among adolescents from Arab immigrant families and the extent to which they develop a robust ethnic identity and experience a heightened sense of connection to their ethnic group. The utilisation of heritage language

facilitates the cultivation of affirmative sentiments towards one's ethnicity, fostering a heightened sense of dedication and connection to said ethnicity. This, in turn, engenders a desire to delve further into the exploration and acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the ethnic group, encompassing its customs, culture, traditions, history, and other relevant aspects.

Table 4. Regression Analysis (Heritage Language Use and Ethnic Identity)

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.36
R ²					0.37
Adjusted R ²					0.39
Standard Error					0.50
Observations					321
ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significant F
Regression	8	33.97	9.64	40.39	6.9
Residual	92	10.55	0.27		
Total	100	44.52			
	Coefficients	SE	t value	P-value	
Constant	0.34	0.37	2.22	0.02	
Heritage Language Use	0.29	0.28	3.97	0.05	

4.3. Moderating Effect of Parental Warmth

Following the examination of direct relationships, the study subsequently proceeded to investigate indirect relationships. The present study aims to examine the moderating role of parental warmth in the association between heritage language use and family cohesion. The table presented below provides evidence supporting the notion that parental warmth plays a positive moderating role in the association between heritage language use and family cohesion. This implies that when parents provide love, understanding, and support, it enhances the impact of using the heritage language on the degree of family cohesion.

Additionally, the study also examined the moderating influence of parental warmth on the association between heritage language use and family discussion. The table provided below illustrates that parental warmth plays a positive moderating role in the association between heritage language use and family discussion. This implies that the presence of parental warmth, characterised by expressions of love, empathy, and assistance from parents, enhances the impact of heritage language utilisation on the extent of family discourse. The degree of parental warmth experienced by children positively correlates with their ability to engage in open and effective communication with their parents using their heritage language. Additionally, a greater sense of parental warmth is associated with a higher affinity for spending time in the presence of their parents.

Dependent Variable	R ²	Variables	B	T	F	P
Family Cohesion	0.39	Constant	3.14	1.99		
		HLU	1.23	1.25		
		PW	0.14	2.11	15.69	0.03
		HLU x PW	0.17	2.63		
Family Discussion	0.33	Constant	3.01	2.22		
		HLU	1.01	2.24		
		PW	0.67	3.40	17.99	0.04
		HLU x PW	0.67	7.61		

5. Discussion

The objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of heritage language utilisation on the calibre of familial relationships and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants who have relocated to different regions across the globe. In order to accomplish the intended objective, data was collected from a representative sample of 321 expatriates and their respective families currently residing in Saudi Arabia. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis using the statistical software SPSS. Regression analysis was employed to examine direct relationships, while moderation was assessed using the Process Hayes Macro. The findings of the analysis indicate that the utilisation of heritage language by adolescents within their households has a substantial positive impact on the overall quality of their familial relationships, specifically in relation to family cohesion and the extent of family discussion. Family cohesion refers to the overall ambiance within a household when all family members are present, as well as the extent to which these individuals enjoy engaging in shared activities and spending time together (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023).

In contrast, the concept of family discussion pertains to the extent and nature of the subjects that family members are at ease discussing amongst themselves, as well as the degree of openness with which they engage in discourse on various topics (Oh & Fuligni, 2010). Families who prioritise the preservation of their children's heritage language following immigration to a new country, as well as children who actively strive to acquire proficiency in their heritage language, are able to maintain a strong connection to their cultural origins. This linguistic continuity facilitates effective communication within the family unit, minimising the presence of language barriers or communication gaps. Prior studies have also presented empirical support for the correlation between open communication and clear discussions within the family unit and reduced stress levels, decreased tension, and improved mental well-being among children (Delaruelle et al., 2021; Kunst, 2021; Meca, Schwartz, Martinez, & McClure, 2019; Mood, Jonsson, & Låftman, 2016; Müller et al., 2020) which ultimately enhances the quality of familial relationships (Pułaczewska, 2019; Valdez, 2023).

The findings of the study also indicate that parental warmth plays a positive moderating role in the association between heritage language use and both family cohesion and family discussion. The presence of parental warmth, characterised by expressions of love, empathy, and assistance, among the parents of immigrant children enhances the influence of heritage language utilisation on the extent of familial discourse and cohesiveness. When a household fosters an atmosphere characterised by understanding, respect, love, and support, children experience a greater sense of freedom to express their thoughts and opinions (Kilpi-Jakonen & Kwon, 2023). The children would subsequently desire to establish a connection with their families, engaging in conversations and seeking opportunities to learn and utilise their heritage language within the household. This proactive approach aims to eliminate any potential barriers that may hinder their familial relationships. In addition to familial ties, the utilisation of heritage languages among immigrant adolescents has been observed to be linked with their ethnic identity.

There exists a possibility that children from immigrant backgrounds may become deeply entrenched in the national identity of the host country to the extent that they entirely disregard their ethnic identity or express a lack of desire to be affiliated with it (Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020). The utilisation of heritage language assumes a significant function in this context as it serves as a constant reminder to these children of their cultural origins and ancestral heritage. By adhering to these practices, individuals ensure the preservation of their ethnic heritage, encompassing customs, norms, culture, and traditions. This not only fosters familial and relational ties but also strengthens their connection to the broader ethnic community. The utilisation of heritage language within the host country's society facilitates the identification of other immigrant families and peers who share the same ethnic background. This, in turn, fosters the formation of potential friendships and the establishment of an ethnic community in a foreign environment (Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021).

Previous studies have also presented numerous pieces of evidence supporting the correlation between the utilisation of heritage languages and the ethnic identity of immigrant families, thereby corroborating the findings of the present study (Arredondo, Rosado, & Satterfield, 2016; Balidemaj & Small, 2019; Chen, Zhou, & Uchikoshi, 2021; Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020; Mu, 2015; Schroeder, Lam, & Marian, 2015; Shen & Jiang, 2021).

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study makes a substantial contribution to the existing body of literature, as research on Arabic as a heritage language and Arab immigrants is still in its early stages and therefore limited. Consequently, there is a need for additional investigation and reflection by scholars in this area. Thus, this research serves to enhance the current literature. Furthermore, a comprehensive examination of the utilisation of the Arabic language and its influence on familial dynamics and ethnic identity among Arab immigrants has not been previously undertaken. Consequently, this research endeavour represents a noteworthy addition to the existing scholarly literature.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study emphasises the significance of incorporating heritage language among adolescents and young children from Arab immigrant families, as it relates to the quality of familial connections and the preservation of ethnic identity. Hence, it is of utmost significance for individuals who relocate to foreign nations, apart from their country of origin, to ensure the utilisation of their heritage language within their household, thereby facilitating the preservation of linguistic ties for their offspring. This phenomenon facilitates the maintenance of children's cultural heritage, enhances the quality of their familial relationships, and fosters a sense of belonging to a broader ethnic community, thereby preventing their detachment from their cultural identity.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The primary focus of this research study was on Arab immigrants. Future studies may explore similar relationships among immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, in order to evaluate the calibre of familial relationships, the examination encompassed two key facets: family cohesion and family discussion. It is recommended that future research endeavours incorporate additional dimensions into their investigations. Future research endeavours may also involve the examination of interview data obtained from immigrant families, thereby facilitating a comprehensive analysis that can yield enhanced insights.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported through the Ambitious Funding track by the Deanship of Scientific Research, Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia [Grant4351]

References

- Arredondo, M. M., Rosado, M., & Satterfield, T. (2016). Understanding the Impact of Heritage Language on Ethnic Identity Formation and Literacy for u.s. Latino Children. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 16(3-4), 245-266. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685373-12342179>
- Balidemaj, A., & Small, M. (2019). The effects of ethnic identity and acculturation in mental health of immigrants: A literature review. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 65(7-8), 643-655. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764019867994>
- Chen, S. H., Zhou, Q., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2021). Heritage language socialization in Chinese American immigrant families: prospective links to children's heritage language proficiency. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(8), 1193-1209. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1547680>
- Cunningham, C. (2020). When 'home languages' become 'holiday languages': teachers' discourses about responsibility for maintaining languages beyond English. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 33(3), 213-227. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2019.1619751>
- Daskalaki, E., Blom, E., Chondrogianni, V., & Paradis, J. (2020). Effects of parental input quality in child heritage language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language*, 47(4), 709-736. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000919000850>
- De Houwer, A. (2017). Minority Language Parenting in Europe and Children's Well-Being. In N. J. Cabrera & B. Leyendecker (Eds.), *Handbook on Positive Development of Minority Children and Youth* (pp. 231-246). Cham: Springer International Publishing. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43645-6_14
- Delaruelle, K., Walsh, S. D., Dierckens, M., Deforche, B., Kern, M. R., Currie, C., et al. (2021). Mental Health in Adolescents with a Migration Background in 29 European Countries: The Buffering Role of Social Capital. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(5), 855-871. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01423-1>
- Douglass, S., & Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2015). A Brief Form of the Ethnic Identity Scale: Development and Empirical Validation. *Identity*, 15(1), 48-65. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2014.989442>
- Foner, N., & Dreby, J. (2011). Relations Between the Generations in Immigrant Families. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37(1), 545-564. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150030>
- Grosjean, F. (2019). *A journey in languages and cultures: The life of a bicultural bilingual*. Oxford University Press, USA. Retrieved from <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/a-journey-in-languages-and-cultures-9780198754947>
- Hair, J. F., Money, A. H., Samouel, P., & Page, M. (2007). Research methods for business. *Education+ Training*, 49(4), 336-337. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/et.2007.49.4.336.2>
- Homma, Y., Zumbo, B. D., Saewyc, E. M., & Wong, S. T. (2014). Psychometric Evaluation of the Six-Item Version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure with East Asian Adolescents in Canada. *Identity*, 14(1), 1-18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2013.858227>
- Kalmijn, M. (2019). Contact and conflict between adult children and their parents in immigrant families: is integration problematic for family relationships? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(9), 1419-1438. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1522245>
- Kilpi-Jakonen, E., & Kwon, H. W. (2023). The Behavioral and Mental Health Benefits of Speaking the Heritage Language within Immigrant Families: The Moderating Role of Family Relations. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 52(10), 2158-2181. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01807-5>
- Kunst, J. R. (2021). Are we facing a "causality crisis" in acculturation research? The need for a methodological (r)evolution. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 85, A4-A8. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.08.003>
- Kwon, J. (2017). Immigrant mothers' beliefs and transnational strategies for their children's heritage language maintenance. *Language and Education*, 31(6), 495-508. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2017.1349137>
- Lee, G.-L., & Gupta, A. (2020). Raising children to speak their heritage language in the USA: Roles of Korean parents. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11(4), 521-531. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1104.01>

- Leyendecker, B., Cabrera, N., Lembecke, H., Willard, J., Kohl, K., & Spiegler, O. (2018). Parenting in a New Land. *European Psychologist*, 23(1), 57-71. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000316>
- Luthra, R., Nandi, A., & Benzeval, M. (2020). Unravelling the 'immigrant health paradox': ethnic maintenance, discrimination, and health behaviours of the foreign born and their children in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(5), 980-1001. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1539287>
- Martiny, S. E., Froehlich, L., Soltanpanah, J., & Haugen, M. S. (2020). Young immigrants in Norway: The role of national and ethnic identity in immigrants' integration. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 61(2), 312-324. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12594>
- Meca, A., Schwartz, S. J., Martinez, C. R., & McClure, H. H. (2019). Longitudinal effects of acculturation and enculturation on mental health: Does the measure matter? – CORRIGENDUM. *Development and Psychopathology*, 31(4), 1599-1599. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579419000129>
- Mohammed, R. (2022). The Role of Language Socialization in Arabic Heritage Language Development in the US. In *Selected Proceedings of the 11th workshop on immigrant languages in the Americas (WILA 11)* (pp. 48-54). Cascadilla Proceedings Project. Retrieved from <http://www.lingref.com/cpp/wila/11/paper3606.pdf>
- Montrul, S. (2010). Dominant language transfer in adult second language learners and heritage speakers. *Second Language Research*, 26(3), 293-327. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658310365768>
- Montrul, S. A. (2012). Is the heritage language like a second language? *EUROSLA Yearbook*, 12(1), 1-29. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1075/eurosla.12.03mon>
- Mood, C., Jonsson, J. O., & Låftman, S. B. (2016). Immigrant Integration and Youth Mental Health in Four European Countries. *European Sociological Review*, 32(6), 716-729. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw027>
- Mu, G. M. (2015). A meta-analysis of the correlation between heritage language and ethnic identity. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(3), 239-254. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.909446>
- Müller, L.-M., Howard, K., Wilson, E., Gibson, J., & Katsos, N. (2020). Bilingualism in the family and child well-being: A scoping review. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 24(5-6), 1049-1070. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006920920939>
- Oh, J. S., & Fuligni, A. J. (2010). The Role of Heritage Language Development in the Ethnic Identity and Family Relationships of Adolescents from Immigrant Backgrounds. *Social Development*, 19(1), 202-220. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00530.x>
- Park, H., Tsai, K. M., Liu, L. L., & Lau, A. S. (2012). Transactional associations between supportive family climate and young children's heritage language proficiency in immigrant families. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 36(3), 226-236. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025412439842>
- Park, M. Y. (2022). Language ideologies, heritage language use, and identity construction among 1.5-generation Korean immigrants in New Zealand. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(7), 2469-2481. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2021.1913988>
- Pułaczewska, H. (2019). Studying Parental Attitudes to Intergenerational Transmission of a Heritage Language: Polish in Regensburg. In B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (Ed.), *Contacts and Contrasts in Educational Contexts and Translation* (pp. 3-19). Cham: Springer International Publishing. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04978-2_1
- Schroeder, S. R., Lam, T. Q., & Marian, V. (2015). Linguistic Predictors of Cultural Identification in Bilinguals. *Applied Linguistics*, 38(4), 463-488. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amv049>
- Sevinç, Y., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018). Heritage language anxiety and majority language anxiety among Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 22(2), 159-179. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069166661635>
- Shen, C., & Jiang, W. (2021). Heritage language maintenance and identity among the second-generation Chinese-Australian children. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 44(1), 6-22. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2021.1890650>
- Tseng, A. (2020). Identity in home-language maintenance. In C. S. Andrea & A. E. Susana (Eds.), *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development* (pp. 109-129). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-006>
- Valdés, G. (2005). Bilingualism, Heritage Language Learners, and SLA Research: Opportunities Lost or Seized? *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 410-426. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00314.x>
- Valdez, C. (2023). Helpful or Harmful? The Effect of Heritage Language Use on Perceived Maternal Closeness in United States Immigrant Families. *Theses and Dissertations*, 10115. Retrieved from <http://hdl.lib.byu.edu/1877/etd12953>
- Visonà, M. W., & Plonsky, L. (2019). Arabic as a heritage language: A scoping review. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 24(4), 599-615. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006919849110>
- Wang, J., Wen, W., Sim, L., Li, X., Yan, J., & Kim, S. Y. (2022). Family Environment, Heritage Language Profiles, and Socioemotional Well-being of Mexican-origin Adolescents with First Generation Immigrant Parents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51(6), 1196-1209. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01594-5>
- Yakushkina, M. (2021). A quantitative approach to heritage language use and symbolic transnationalism. Evidence from the Cuban-American population in Miami. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 15(2), 194-210. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2020.1852513>