

INSTRUCTOR –STUDENT COMMUNICATION: CULTURAL MISCONCEPTIONS

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***Abstract:** Intercultural communication among people of different native languages is a two way street which includes cultural expectations from interlocutors on both sides., Thus, for second language learners, understanding the native culture of an interlocutor is more than simply knowing the language Unfortunately, communication among these types of interlocutors may be difficult if their cultural expectations are incompatible with one another. In an international educational setting, communication is especially complex because it involves several cultures including that of the language second/foreign instructor. When a language learner enters a conversation or exposed to any type of verbal or nonverbal communication, all cultural information and experiences are the basis of such communication. Both these experiences and cultural information set the expectations an interlocutor holds before engaging in communication, during, and after the communication.*

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Intercultural communication among people of different native languages is a two way street which includes cultural expectations from interlocutors on both sides. Thus, for foreign

language learners, understanding the native culture of an interlocutor is more than simply knowing the language unfortunately, communication among these types of interlocutors may be difficult if their cultural expectations are incompatible with one another. In an international educational setting, communication is especially complex because it also adds the culture of the language instructor. When a language learner enters a conversation or is exposed to any type of verbal or nonverbal communication, all cultural information and experiences are the bases for such communication. Both these experiences and cultural information set the expectations an interlocutor holds before engaging in communication, during, and after the communication.

This research focuses on a pilot study seeking to investigate the cultures of the two types of Heritage learners of Arabic. Although there were a total of four student participant groups, two groups were a mean of investigating the cultures of the heritage students with the cultures of American and Egyptian students. The research consists of four groups or participants. Each group includes 10 students divided evenly among genders. . The fifth group consists of the instructors. This research clarifies the expectations or beliefs all groups hold, and how instances of miscommunications may occur because of their pre-held cultural ideas and beliefs.

Investigating culture is a very challenging task given that a single society alone can be formed from an amalgamation of cultures. Because an understanding of a target language culture is as important as the target language itself, it is crucial for language learners to study the language while understanding the culture. Brislin (2000) in an attempt to define culture wrote:

“Culture refers to shared values and concepts among people who most often speak the same language and live in proximity to each other. These values and concepts are transmitted for generations, and they provide guidance for everyday behaviors.” (p.4)

However, as he continues discussing culture, Scollon states that culture is almost impossible to define (ibid Scollon et al 2001) and he clarifies the two meanings of the word “culture” by saying:

“Before moving on, however, we want to mention that there is an intercultural problem in using the word ‘culture’ itself. In English there are two normal uses of this word: high culture, and anthropological culture. The first meaning, high culture, focuses on intellectual and artistic achievements.In studies of intercultural communication, our concern is not the high culture, but with the anthropological culture. When we use the word ‘culture’ in its anthropological sense, we mean to say culture of the customs, world-view, language, kinship system, social organization, and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group.” (Pp.139-40).

“The subject of ‘‘intercultural communication’’ is beset by a major problem, since there is very little agreement on what people mean by the idea of culture in the first place. The word ‘‘culture’’ often brings more problems than it solves.” (Scollon, 2001, p. 138). This research does not only investigate culture but goes a step further to question intercultural communication between different groups in an educational setting.(Sadri et al 2011, p.10) “Intercultural communication occurs when the people creating shared meanings have different cultural perspectives and values. Typically, it is the differing world views of members of different cultures that make intercultural communication challenging. Intercultural communication may occur between individuals; Intercultural communication may also occur between groups of people or within nations.”

Sadri et al (2011) states “The study of intercultural communications is incorporated into the fields Of international relations, political science, psychology, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, comparative literature, education, technical communication and history.” (p.110)

This communication definitely requires a medium, according to Patel (2011) “In other words, language--verbal or non -verbal—as a medium plays an important role in conveying acceptable or unacceptable messages among people from diverse backgrounds.” (p.92) Patel (2011) quotes “O’Hair, Friedrich and Dixon (2008) contend that since language varies in its preciseness. “ It is important to explore new ways of expressing what you mean. In this regard, it is important to consider that the environment in which the message is sent and received, the nature of the

communication being sent, and particularly, the expectations of the sender and receiver.” (Patel, 2011, p.102 & O’Hair, 2008pp. 131) This research does not question language but rather the expectations of the receiver and sender and particularly, instructor –student expectations in an intercultural educational setting. This research focuses on five different groups of students: four different types of heritage learners of Arabic and the fifth are the Egyptian instructors.

Taking the research a step further in order to identify the effects of globalization, Samovar et al (2012) wrote ” In a culturally globalized world, between-situations are becoming essential for any understanding of culture. There were three stages in globalization. The first one was political, the founding of the United Nations in 1945. The second one was the economic globalization, the spread of free-market capitalism in virtually every country of the world since 1980. The third one is...cultural globalization which has an essential function for the efficient working of the political and economic globalizations of the world.” (p. 46) Within the results, the effects of globalization shall become clearer.

This research is concerned with heritage learners of Arabic and according to Kagan (2000) heritage students usually have an understanding, to a good extent, of their heritage culture. The aim of this research is to investigate a few aspects in the culture of heritage students and whether their perception of these cultural aspects is exactly the same as those of a native speaker or whether they tend to lean towards the culture of the country where they were raised.

The issue of heritage students was unsubstantially addressed in the past millennium. However, it has become the focus of the attention of many academic institutions in this new millennium and especially after the year 2001; to the extent that a new e-journal is dedicated to that respect. Kagan (2001), who quotes both Valdes and Fishman, and states that a heritage speaker has been defined in various ways. One of the following definitions of a heritage speaker, “to refer to a student of a language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (p. 375), and from Fishman, as a person who has “a language of personal relevance other than English.” (Kagan, 2001, p. 508)

The following four types of Heritage students of Arabic are identified by Ibrahim and Allam (2006): 1) Those who have both Arabic speaking parents and heard Arabic at home but lived outside the Arabic speaking world, 2) Those who have one Arabic speaking parent but lived outside the Arab world, 3) Those who do not come from the Arabic speaking world but are Muslims, and finally 4) Those who are Arabic speaking who lived their whole lives in an Arabic speaking country but attended an international school and never received any formal education in Arabic. This fourth type of heritage student was introduced in the previous research for the first time and learners in this group were considered as heritage students linguistically.

Participants and the Questionnaire

During the language learning process, it is important that professors are aware of the native cultures of their students to be able to work with them appropriately. This pilot study investigates the cultures of the three types (A, B, & D) of heritage students. Participants (students) were divided into four groups, each of 10 students. Students were divided evenly between both genders in all groups. Participant ages ranged from 18–22. Within these groups were two control groups; the Egyptians and Americans to function as the means of measurement of the cultural components in question. The Egyptian group attended language schools which taught the sciences and mathematics in English, and social studies and other subjects in Arabic. Thus these students have studied Arabic since their first years of schooling. The purpose of including these students in this study was to include Egyptians who have knowledge of the English language. With this knowledge of English and accessing internet sites, English literature, as well as conversing with native speakers of English it is possible that, the cultural differences between the Egyptians and Americans would not be very great. The remaining two participant groups are heritage students. One group included students who had either both or one Arabic speaking parent and grew up in the United States, and the other consisting of Egyptian heritage students and residents of Egypt who studied in American International schools. All students and instructors came from the American University of Cairo. All groups were asked to complete a questionnaire with 7 questions. Two of the questions focused on the idea of friends, considering the value of friendship among students in this age group. The other

five questions focused on the idea of space, punctuality, students' favorite dishes, and their favorite holidays or feasts. The last question focused on their relationships with their professors. The results of the questionnaire indicate that both types of heritage students are similar in all aspects sometimes leaning towards the American preferences and in other cases leaning towards the Egyptian preferences, concluding that these two groups are alike not only linguistically but also culturally despite the fact that students in the fourth group grew up in Egypt. The last groups consist of ten instructors of Arabic as a foreign language. The instructor group was only questioned about the idea of punctuality.

The Research and Results

Culture is defined as “behavior peculiar to *Homo sapiens*, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behavior.” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2008) Thus, culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, and works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements.”(Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2008)Therefore, the questions investigated some of these elements. In this section each question is presented along with its results. Participant responses are presented in the tables below. The first two questions asked their age and gender. The third question was directed towards Egyptians to indicate if they attended schools in either a national or international setting. The fourth question was directed towards Arabic speaking American heritage learners to gather information about their origins. It is important to mention the attitudes among the 10 Egyptian instructors. At the beginning of their careers, they saw the heritage students of Arabic as Egyptians or part of the Arabic-speaking world, but after their experiences teaching, they no longer thought that this was the case.

The following section of this study presents six questions and responses (Questions 5-11) from the student questionnaire. *Question 5* asked “If you see someone in the morning who you know well, and this person does not say “good morning” to you, what does this mean to you?”

The main purpose of this question focusing on greetings is to investigate the cultural awareness of students of the Egyptian/Arabic speaking culture where a greeting is not

simply a greeting, but rather a message indicating a close relationship between interlocutors.

The following table compares the responses of *Question 5* between the two control groups; the American students and Egyptian students who attended language schools. Indications of any negative feelings in the responses are highlighted (italicized). While six Egyptians wrote that passing a person who does not say good morning would affect them negatively and even annoy or upset them, only two Americans thought the same. In other words, culturally there is a difference in the concept of greetings.

Table 1: Morning Greeting (American and Egyptian [attended language schools] responses)

Question 5: “If you see someone whom you know well, in the morning, and this person does not say “good morning”, what does this mean to you?”

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Language Schools/ Egyptian</i>
Maybe they didn't see me, they're busy or they're in their own world at the moment.	<i>It annoys me because we are friends and we should greet each other.</i>
It means that they are in a bad mood	He is tired of having a bad morning.
It depends on whether they are in a hurry, if they saw me; I think I would let it go.	If he isn't busy or maybe upset and he ignored me/ <i>would be angry</i>
Probably they are tired /not paying attention	If he saw me and did not talk, <i>then I will feel he is treating me rudely</i>
This person is having a bad day and something is	<i>He is not polite or he is</i>

troubling him	<i>ignoring me</i>
I find it rude when someone does not acknowledge me, especially if we know each other well. I think exchanging greetings is a matter of common courtesy.	S/he is not feeling well today, tired
That they either didn't see me , or they are very busy	<i>That s/he is upset with me or in a bad mood</i>
They didn't see me or are very busy	He is not in the mood, or <i>there is something wrong whether concerning me or him.</i> Also, he could have not noticed me.
They didn't see or hear me; they are lost in their thoughts.	They are in a bad mood or they have something on their mind and they are busy thinking about it.
I would think that they are angry with me, or they were having a bad day.	If he did not do it on purpose, this will not hurt me, but if he did it on purpose, <i>I will be hurt</i>

Table 2 presents the responses of *Question 5* among the four participant groups and it is found that both groups of heritage students are more similar than the other two previous groups compared in *Table 1*. Like in *Table 1*, any indications of negative feelings are highlighted. In both heritage groups, five students seemed to take it personally that they were not greeted with a “good morning,” and assumed either that the person who did not say goodmorning “is rude” or “mad at them [mad at the participant].” However, both heritage groups (those who lived abroad and graduated from international schools) are

leaning more towards the Egyptian culture found in the results of *Table 1*. This similarity may be because of the home setting where the cultural effects from the parent figures may be dominant.

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage/lived Abroad</i>	<i>Heritage /International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
Maybe they didn't see me, they're busy or they're in their own world at the moment.	Mother: English Father: Egyptian Nothing, people need to chill out about the little things	Either there is an issue or the person didn't see me	It annoys me because we are friends and we should greet each other.
It means that they are in a bad mood	Mother :American Father: Egyptian It bothers me; <i>I take it as an insult.</i>	<i>He does not like me</i>	He is tired of having a bad morning.
It depends on whether they are in a hurry, if they saw me; I think I would let it go.	Mother: Palestinian Father: Palestinian Either busy or did not see you, but if he does see you and not say anything, <i>the person is very rude.</i>	Either he didn't notice me, or he's not in a good mood, or he just doesn't care.	If he isn't busy or maybe upset and he ignored me I would be angry
Probably they are tired /not paying	Mother: Syrian Father: Syrian Nothing	<i>He doesn't Like me</i>	If he saw me and did not talk, then I

attention			will feel he is treating me rudely
This person is having a bad day and something is troubling him	Mother: Egyptian Father: Egyptian <i>This person is either rude or very tired</i>	<i>It shows disrespect</i>	He is not polite or he is ignoring me
I find it rude when someone does not acknowledge me, especially if we know each other well. I think exchanging greetings is a matter of common courtesy.	Mother :American Father: Egyptian Maybe they did not see me	<i>Either the person is having a bad day or is angry at me</i>	S/he is not feeling well today, tired
That he either didn't see me , or he is very busy	Mother: American Father: Libyan It means that they are rude	<i>They are mad at me</i>	That s/he is upset with me or in a bad mood

<p>They didn't see me or are very busy</p>	<p>Mother: English Father: Egyptian If they seem preoccupied, I think maybe they are just busy or worried, but if they seem particularly rude, then it probably would annoy me, but I'd try to shrug it off and give them the benefit of the doubt</p>	<p><i>It means that they were not paying attention</i></p>	<p>He is not in the mood, or there is something wrong whether concerning me or him. Also, he could have not noticed me.</p>
<p>They didn't see or hear me; they are lost in their thoughts.</p>	<p>Mother: Egyptian Father Egyptian They are tired, didn't see me</p>	<p><i>It means either one of two things: 1- the person did not see me 2- or if they did, then there is maybe something wrong</i></p>	<p>They are in a bad mood or they have something on their mind and they are busy thinking about it.</p>
<p>I would think that they are angry with me, or they were having a bad day.</p>	<p>Mother: English Father: Egyptian They are having a bad day or they are being rude by not saying hello.</p>	<p><i>They either didn't see me because they are tired or they are avoiding me.</i></p>	<p>If he did not do it on purpose, this will not hurt me, but if he did it on purpose, I will be hurt</p>

Table 2: Morning greeting (All student responses [same question as Question 1])

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage</i>	<i>International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
They should keep in touch to share life experience but not every hour of the day.	Mother: Egyptian Father: Egyptian (Grew up in the England) Keep in touch unless they are lazy	A little of both	They should keep in touch and make an activity together.
They should keep in touch online at any rate, calling is not necessary	Mother: American Father: Egyptian (Grew up in the States) Depending on the intimacy between friends, my close friends get call from me during the week Just as a way of keeping in touch.	Just call to say hello	It's up to them
I don't like to call just to say hello	Mother: Palestinian Father: Palestinian (Grew up in the States) both	Both	Both
Both	Mother: Syrian Father: Syrian (Grew up in the States) Keep in touch	Both	I think they should say hello anywhere and any time
Friends should call to keep in touch especially if they live far away.	Mother: Egyptian Father: Egyptian (Grew up in the States) Calling to say hello is always good	They should call every once in a while at least to keep in touch	They should always be in touch either ways
I keep in touch with	Mother: American	They should	Call to say

<p>friends just to say hello. I think that friendships can easily dissolve if the parties involved are disinterested in each other's lives.</p>	<p>Father: Egyptian (Grew up in the States)</p> <p>Keep in touch</p>	<p>call and say 'hello'</p>	<p>hello</p>
<p>Friends should call to say hello and keep in touch as well as call when there are events.</p>	<p>Mother: American Father: Libyan (Grew up in the States)</p> <p>No, they should call to keep in touch</p>	<p>They should call whether there is an activity or not</p>	<p>Both</p>
<p>Keep in touch but not necessarily every day</p>	<p>Mother: English Father: Egyptian (Grew up in the England)</p> <p>It's nice when friends just call to say hello, but I often call when there's an activity.</p>	<p>Yes, friends should call to say hello</p>	<p>They should just call sometimes to say 'hello' as that would be better for both your social life and your career or education</p>
<p>Keep in touch if possible</p>	<p>Mother: Egyptian Father Egyptian (Grew up in the States)</p> <p>Friends should always call for any reason</p>	<p>Both, if they are close friends then they should call to check up , if we haven't seen each other for a while</p>	<p>Close friends should call just because, acquaintances call when there is an activity.</p>

		or vice versa	
Friends <u>should</u> call to say hello and keep in touch especially if they haven't seen each other for a while	Mother: Egyptian Father: American (Grew up in the States) They should call and just say hello and keep in touch	I believe school friends should be in touch regularly. My best friends are from high school. I have seen them every day for the past 5 years.	For me, friends should just call to say hello because this means that they care

All instructors replied that although they understand the American culture, they felt uneasy when another Arabic speaking interlocutor (both groups Arabic speaking heritage learners) did not say “good morning.” This is an instance where the instructors’ awareness of the other culture played a positive role but still kept uneasiness to it.

Question 6 asked “Should friends just call to say “hello” and keep in touch, or should they only call when there is an activity to take place? The responses were almost similar among all four groups and it is important to note that all participants indicated that “friends” are the most important and influential social network for this age group. Possible indications of globalization effects occurred in the results of this question given that the responses would have definitely differed with an older age group.

Table 3: Contacting friends (all student responses)

Question 6: “Should friends just call to say “hello” and keep in touch, or should they only call when there is an activity to take place?”

Question 7 investigated the concept of “personal space” and asked “You are standing in front of an elevator with another person of the same gender who makes sure the distance between the two of you is one meter. What would you think about that?”

Table 4: Personal space (all student responses)

Question 7: “You are standing in front of an elevator with another person of the same gender who makes sure the distance between the two of you is one meter. What would you think about that?”

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage/lived Abroad</i>	<i>Heritage /International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
They live their space and I'm O.K. with that.	<i>Dude has intimacy issues,</i> wouldn't take it personally	Why does it matter	There should be at least one meter between you and the other person because it shows respect. But if someone gets too close to me I get annoyed because he's interrupting my privacy.
It's fine, everyone has their bubble.	It's <i>normal</i> or maybe I smell bad.	I find it normal	He is paranoid
I smell bad!!! Or vice versa	He is respecting my personal space	Normal	Maybe he has some kind of phobia
I probably wouldn't have noticed, I wouldn't think it was somewhat strange	Not important	Nothing	I think that they want to treat me bad
It would be normal for most elevators , it is a mark of politeness	This person respects personal space	Nothing	Physiological problem
I think it is respectful. I	Nothing	I'd wonder why that	s/he doesn't like me, or feels jealous, or maybe a

do not like to feel encroached upon by strangers of the opposite sex.		person is annoyed or afraid of me	psychological problem.
I wouldn't think twice	They like their own personal space	Nothing	Nothing
Nothing, the person just wants space	This wouldn't bother me	Nothing	Weird, I do not bite and she has no self-esteem (she's stupid).
I prefer more space	They don't need to stand too close.	Nothing	They like their own personal space, they don't want to mingle or shy
I would think that they are not comfortable being in close proximity with other people.	That they are being respectful and keeping a good distance to not make me feel uncomfortable	It's normal. I do not like standing close to other people especially people I do not know.	It is important to have distance between 2 persons, this means she gives me space

Here, only one American was offended, whereas six Egyptians were offended. In both heritage groups, only one person in each group was offended. In other words, concerning this aspect, the heritage groups seemed to lean towards the American culture. In other words, those who grew up in the United States and those who attended international schools seemed to share similar cultural ideas. This indicates the importance of schooling in possibly shaping students' cultures. The idea of space seems to be interpreted differently between the American, Egyptian, and heritage cultures. In fact, an instance of miscommunication occurred when a teacher was not keeping an appropriate distance with a student. It was only made clear after another teacher informed this teacher what had happened, and that this distance had been miscommunicated to the student.

Question 8 asked “If you arrive 10 minutes late to class, what will you say upon your entrance?” This question was designed to test the cultural reaction (shared by all groups) to a certain situation. This is also one of the questions that was given to the instructors. It was indicated that in the American culture, this late student might enter the classroom silently and speak to the instructor after class to explain the late arrival. In an Egyptian/Arabic-speaking culture, the student might greet the class out loud upon entering, and may even apologize to the instructor out loud.

Table 5: Arriving late to class (all student responses)

Question 8: “If you arrive 10 minutes late to class, what will you say upon your entrance?”

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage/lived Abroad</i>	<i>Heritage /International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools/Egyptians</i>
I usually apologize politely and quickly so I do not disturb the rest of the class.	Nothing	'Sorry', I'm late, but I'd probably explain why if there's a good reason.	Sorry
I would quietly enter the room, make eye contact with the teacher and if it was clear that I was not interrupting, say sorry.	Sorry, I am late	Sorry	Sorry and give an excuse for my late entrance
Nothing, I would apologize after class	Sorry and duck my head and go to my seat quickly.	I will give a legitimate excuse	Nothing, as I do not want to disturb the class.
I would apologize to the teacher quietly and sit down and apologize	'excuse me' or 'sorry' but only if it is not disruptive	I would apologize for being late and ask if I can come in to class.	Sorry, I am late, if the Dr. cares about punctuality, if they don't, then I just go in

after class			
I would apologize	Sorry and sit down. Usually explain it when it is a small class	Sorry Dr. I am late	I am sorry for being late and I will not do it again
I'm sorry, I was held up because of such & such	"Sorry"	No, just sit down and be quite	I am sorry for coming in late.
I whisper 'sorry', then quietly make my way to my seat.	Sorry	Sorry for being late, may I enter	Sorry
I'm sorry	Sorry, I'm late	Nothing, just walk in silently	Good morning, sorry I am late.
I'll try to go in as quietly as possible and then apologize after class.	Sorry	Nothing, just go in	Sorry, I am late
I'm sorry, I'll explain after class.	Sorry for being late	Sorry for being late	Sorry, I am late

As shown in *Table 5*, all Egyptians but one were going to say “sorry”, thus interrupting the class. This was exactly the opposite reaction of students in the American participant group. Both groups of heritage students tended to lean more toward the Egyptian culture. The situation became even more complicated when the instructors answered this same question. Half of the instructors, who are Egyptians, expected the students to apologize if they should arrive late to class. The other half of the instructors explained that because these students are studying in an American University, they should still not cause interruptions during the class.

Question 8 focused on students’ interpretations of social relationships, and asked “If you were absent from a class and your professor asked you the next time about the reason for your absence, how would you consider this question?” (Do you see this as your professor interfering, caring about you?etc.)

Table 6: Instructor asking about absences (all student responses)

Question 8: “If you were absent from a class and your professor asked you about the reason for your absence during the next class, how would you consider this question?”

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage/lived Abroad</i>	<i>Heritage /International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
I would consider this a valid question. The professor deserves to know why his or her students do not attend class. If I have a close relationship with the professor, I would view this question as caring.	It depends on why they are asking	Caring	Depends on the professor
Caring	Caring, worrying about me	Depends on how the professor	Normal

	missing class	frames it	
Caring	It depends a lot on the tone of voice of the professor, and my relationship with him/her.	I will give a legitimate excuse	Caring
Caring	Professional-wondering whether or not it's excused, otherwise, caring.	I would consider it their right to ask for that shows they care.	Depends on the relationship I have with the professor, if we're friends then caring, if not, then they are just curious
It is their right to know why I missed class.	Caring , making sure that there are no problems that will affect my school	Caring because the professor is asking because s/he does not want me to lose marks	It depends on the way he is asking the question
Wanted to know if my reason for being absent merits making an absence that may hurt Interfering, but	Depends on the tone	Protocol	Caring

depends on the professor's personality. I might consider it caring if I have a close relationship with the professor my grade or not			
Caring, responsible	Interfering, but depends on the professor's personality. I might consider it caring if I have a close relationship with the professor	Caring	In USA: curious, in Egypt, caring
Caring	Caring	Either caring or concerned, or annoyed & frustrated.	Slightly caring but more upset
I would consider it a normal question a teacher would ask.	Caring and checking to see the reason	Interfering	Not a problem
A regular caring question, one that the professor has a right to ask.	Caring	Interfering	Depends

The results of this question are quiet interesting in terms of the responses on the American side. The Americans seemed to think that the professor has the right to ask about a student absence, and shows care for the students. On the Egyptian side, however, students seemed to think that their attitudes would depend on the situation. Three of the heritage students

who lived abroad also mentioned that it would depend on the situation and the rest of the students believed that a professor asking about an absence is an indication of care for the students. This can be explained from conversations with these heritage students. They seemed to be upset with their parents' interference in their lives; a similar attitude from the Egyptian group. The group of heritage students living in Egypt did not have the same problem. Can this be because the parents of these students share more of the international culture? Or, is it that the parents living in the States may sustain the culture they left many years ago? All Egyptian instructors held the American educational institution culture, which is not to ask the students about the reason of their absence except if the students raised the issue. The instructors indicated that asking the students is not the policy of the institution but rather their culture. The instructors also mentioned that if this was not clearly mentioned to them at the beginning of their careers, they would surely have asked their students.

Actually, all of the questions discussed above would have raised complex issues if they would have occurred between an instructor and one of the heritage learners of Arabic living in a multicultural setting. As educators, we sometimes have our anecdotes of unintentional cultural ignorance in the beginning of our careers. It is sometimes automatic for Egyptian language instructors to assume that the culture of their heritage students of Egyptian origin is identical to their own cultures. This then may cause these instructors to form false expectations of their heritage students.

Question 10 investigated each student's favorite food dish and found the following:

- 1) Globalization seems to play a role in student responses given that international dishes were chosen by all groups.
- 2) Both the heritage group living in the USA and the Egyptian group had the most students who chose dishes from Arabic speaking countries as their favorites.. The heritage group might have chosen these types of dishes because they may not be popular in the USA (current residency)

Table 7: Favorite dishes (all student responses)

Question 10: “What is your favorite [food] dish?”

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage</i>	<i>International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
Roasted duck and crème brulee	Spaghetti	√Molukhiyya	Pasta
Pizza	√Macaronabashamal	Sushi	Sushi
Cake	Guacamole	Pasta and Chicken Fillet	Noodles and any type of soup
√Fattoush	√Kishk	Anything Chinese	√Besara, √Sharkasiyya
√Koshari	√Molukhiyya(Jews green mellow)	Steak	Fried shrimp
Mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese	Spaghetti	Smoked Salmon	√ Fattah
Beef bourguignon	√Massaka	Shrimp	√Molukhiyya
Ice Cream	√Mansaf	Nothing in particular	√Koshari
Pizza	√ Stuffed grape leaves	Pizza	Fried Chicken
Chicken pot pie	√Macaronabashamal	√ Stuffed grape leaves	√Molukhiyya

**Note: √ symbol represents dishes eaten in Arabic-speaking countries

The final question investigated favorite holidays or feasts (holidays in some Arabic-speaking cultures are considered to be feasts). It seemed that the country where one was raised has the most influence. This may be a reason why the group of heritage students living abroad said they preferred Thanksgiving and Christmas while those students living in Egypt preferred the Eid feast (The Islamic calendar has two Feasts called 'iid/ meaning 'feast'. One feast lasts for three days and the other lasts for four days. The three-day feast is called *Eid Al-Fitr* and it follows the fasting month of Ramadan and is known in popular culture as the small Eid. The other feast occurs after the pilgrimage to Mecca which is called Eid Al-ADHA [known as the big Eid]).

Table 8: Favorite holidays/feasts (all student responses)

Question 11: "What is your favorite holiday/feast?"

<i>Americans</i>	<i>Heritage/lived Abroad</i>	<i>Heritage /International Schools</i>	<i>Language Schools</i>
Halloween	US Thanksgiving	New Year	Spring Break and Eid
Christmas	Christmas	Anything long.	Christmas-summer
Thanksgiving	Christmas	<i>Ramadan</i>	Spring break
Christmas	Eid	Eid El-Fitr	Eid Al-ADHa&Fitr
Halloween	Thanksgiving	Eid El-Fitr	Summer

			vacation
Christmas	Thanksgiving	Eid	Summer vacation/ Eid al-ADHA
Thanksgiving	Christmas(even though I am a Muslim)	Eid	Christmas
Christmas	Eid El-Fitr	Summer Holiday	Christmas
Christmas	Christmas(although Muslim) / Thanksgiving	<i>Big Eid</i>	Mid-year recess
Christmas	<i>Eid Ramadan</i>	Christmas	Eid El-Fitr

Conclusion

As has been mentioned earlier, this is a pilot study in a field that has many speculations but no empirical facts, and is thus some of the first steps in research in this area of study. However, the findings show that, the international school students seem to really be similar to heritage students of Arabic not only linguistically but culturally as well. Also, both groups of heritage students seem to have a culture of their own, more similar to each other than to one of the controlled groups. Third, they seem to have some features of one control group in one respect and the feature of the other control group in another aspect. Fourth, the instructors themselves seem to have one culture and share another. The expectations on both sides are somewhat different. Finally, globalization seems to be quite a powerful influence on younger age group. Further studies in this area would be of great importance

to actually identify the culture of these groups to help professors of all parties engage culturally. Most importantly, steps to avoiding instances of miscommunication may be avoided by educating language instructors on the cultures of their students.

End Notes

1-This study was completed in 2008

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