



HAKINI ARABI

Lebanese Arabic Language Learning App

Nadine Afiouni

MFA in Integrated Design
University of Baltimore

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RESEARCH

Introduction

In what was considered a bold decision among our family and friends, my husband and I decided to move across continents to settle in the United States and call it *home*. We left our native country, Lebanon, and became an immigrant family living within the vast Lebanese Diaspora. Diaspora is defined as “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland.”¹

Lebanon, a relatively small country within the Middle East (4,014 square miles, roughly two-thirds the size of the state of Connecticut) has a population of 4.3 million, while its’ diaspora is around 14 million.²

As a first generation immigrant, I am continuously questioning and re-assessing what defines my identity. Is it belonging, relevance, culture or language? Even though the topic of identity is complex, many studies conclude that language plays a pivotal role in defining our identity.³ While the correlation between my ties to my mother language – Arabic – and my identity are deeply ingrained, I question how established are these connections in my children, who are second generation Americans – born and raised in the United States.

Similar to many families living within the Lebanese Diaspora, children of Lebanese first generation immigrants fully comprehend the Lebanese dialect, without necessarily being able to master the spoken and written versions of Arabic, causing a major interference with their identity construction. As a parent, I feel responsible in preserving and strengthening my children’s associations and proficiency of the Arabic Language. For this reason, I have researched methodologies of how to teach Arabic to teens of Lebanese descent in order to speak, read and write Arabic. The ultimate goal of this project is to strengthen second-generation youth associations with their ‘heritage language’ and nurture a major component in their identity development.

Heritage Languages

Heritage languages are those languages with which we have a meaningful connection through our family, our culture, and our nation of origin.⁴ According to the Center of Applied Linguistics, “*Heritage language learners* are those students seen as having a

personal or cultural connection with the language and an interest in preserving it for future generations.”⁵

“ Unlike students who start a foreign language from scratch, most heritage learners come equipped with some degree of fluency, if not literacy, in a language, and an understanding of the community that uses the language.” (NPR, 2015)

Many first generation immigrants might remain dominant in their heritage language their whole life; or have equal strength in their heritage language as well as a secondary language. In Valdes’s study of heritage language learners at Stanford University, she concludes that “Second, third, and fourth-generation students will clearly be English dominant. Their strength in English will very strongly overshadow their abilities in the heritage language.”⁶ This notion is exceptionally true in my own surrounding. My children, demonstrate a high level of understanding of the colloquial Arabic language with an inability to speak or read Arabic themselves. In addition, the survey that I conducted as part of my discovery phase for this project, proved my finding even further. Children of immigrant families that are exposed to the heritage language within the home environment all exhibit varying levels of understanding the rapidly spoken language and are even able to understand subtle humor. The challenge arises when these children are requested to converse in Arabic - they all decide to answer back in English; where their dominant strength lies. Lack of confidence in using the heritage language will ultimately lead to structural loss of the language within the Diaspora and consequently this “results in the transferring by immigrants of their mother tongue in a mutilated form to the next generation of speakers,” states Valdes.⁷

Language development is a complex and unique human quality; preserving and teaching a heritage language comes with a degree of struggle when you live in a country different than the country of origin. The nature of the Arabic language adds another layer of complexity to teaching this language to students. There is a difference between Modern Standard Arabic and Spoken Arabic. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the universal language taught within schools and universities; it is further used in newspapers, news broadcasts, official speeches, legal documents and books. Among the 22 Arab speaking countries, *no one* uses Modern Standard Arabic in their daily conversations.⁸ What is used in daily conversations is spoken or colloquial Arabic that varies in dialects depending

on the country you are in within the Arab region. The countries of the Levant: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine share the same dialect that can be understood by the natives of these countries. In contrast, spoken or colloquial Arabic is seen as the language of relationships. Regardless of how proficient you are in the Modern Spoken Arabic, if you can not converse in the spoken Arabic, individuals will ultimately feel foreign to the cultural setting of the Arab speaking country they are in.

Language Learning Tools

Traditionally, Arabic was always taught through the use of textbooks. A major challenge to these textbooks is that they were largely outdated in terms of methodology and the overall design of the content. On each of my visits to Lebanon over the past years, I have bought yet another new series that teaches Arabic. None of these books helped spark interest in my children to learn their heritage language. On the contrary, it made them view Arabic as an *old-fashioned* language and something quite foreign to them.

My search led me to look for online Arabic aided language tools. The web offers access to language learning software and programs that aid in acquiring a new language. *Rosetta Stone* uses interactive software to accelerate language learning through programs for schools, businesses and individuals. *Little Pim*, another new online program is catered to teaching children ages, zero to six years, a new language. Both offer a different approach to learning languages. One thing they have in common though is that they target an audience with no formal knowledge of the language. Their audiences are not necessarily immigrant families but any individual interested in acquiring a new language with no prior exposure to the language itself.

In my active search, I could not find an online source that caters to an audience of immigrant children who have a huge advantage of understanding the dialect and the spoken words without necessarily being able to read and write in their heritage language. Thus, leaving a huge gap for the heritage language learner.

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence states that language learners acquire languages in five different stages.⁹ The first stage is 'pre-production' where students tend to be non-verbal due to the fact that they might be anxious and

frustrated at their lack of understanding of new words and phrases that are being introduced. The second stage is 'early production' where students start to repeat common words that are used in conversational settings. They are more comfortable constructing simple statements or questions using isolated words or simple phrases. During the third stage known as 'Speech Emergence', students will exhibit an increased level of proficiency in decoding and understanding conversations, dialogues and simple stories. The fourth stage is 'Intermediate Fluency' where the student will have a better command of reading comprehension, writing and accuracy in their response. Students are able to utilize different strategies they learned at this stage. The fifth and final stage is 'Advanced Fluency' where the student is almost like a 'native speaker'. *Rosetta Stone, Babel*, and *Little Pim* and many other language learning online tools cater to audiences with the above structured levels of learning. They aim to introduce the concept of the language to the student at the first 'pre-production' stage. The heritage learner however needs programs that are tailored differently. A heritage learner will fall into the above third level of 'speech emergence' since they have been hearing the language within their social context.

Heritage learners subconsciously grasp their linguistic knowledge by continuously being exposed to it within their family setting. Psychologists such as Dewey have evidence that, learning starts as an unconscious activity and process within the brain.¹⁰ While language apps have proved to be helpful resources in aiding in language acquisition, the need for a tailored language learning system for heritage language learner is needed for a specific audience of second generation students that have prior knowledge in their heritage language.

There's an App for that!

The App Store was launched in 2008 and it was meant to be a 'wow factor' to compensate for the minimal hardware upgrades to the Iphone 3G.¹¹ The term 'App' gained significant popularity after Apple's 2009 campaign "There's an app for that" which focused on positioning the app as the ultimate solution for any problem with the ability to be accessed anytime, anywhere. "Apps are small programs -- pieces of software designed to apply the powers of a computing system for a particular purpose".¹² Designers of apps have been very cognizant of the need for both clarity and simplicity given the limited space they are creating within.

Apps have been undergoing phases since they were introduced in 2008. In their earlier stages, they held the subliminal promise of happiness at your fingertip; always having a solution for anything. In their second phase, apps “fought hard to be our home-screen.”¹³ Today apps are service driven and focused on being used for specific purposes without the aim of cramming everything into one general app.

Duolingo, an online, free, language learning app found that “an average of 34 hours of online visual and audio responses through their app are equivalent to a full university semester of language education.”¹⁴ *Duolingo* is based on the model of learning the language through visual and audio guided translated tasks. Clearly, it is using subconscious modes of language retention to learn a new language.

*“In a teaching situation, merely teaching the rules of a language may not be the only answer,” explained Dr Williams. “Instead, using tasks that focus attention on the relevant grammatical forms in language could help learners access unconscious learning pathways in the brain. This would greatly enhance the speed of acquisition of a second language.”*¹⁵

An App that focuses on engaging youth into learning their heritage language through engaging graphics, structured content and easy to navigate user experience will be an invaluable tool to a wide audience of immigrants from a Lebanese Descent.

Apps continue to be a main component in mobile learning also known as M-learning. M-learning is designed to address personal development goals that can be adapted to the user’s personal needs and tailored around their daily routines. M-learning has paved the way for the Age of engagement where students are always connected, increasingly creative and continuously contributing to their society. According to the PEW teens and technology survey in 2015 three-quarters of teens have or have access to a smart-phone and that 91% of teens access the internet through a mobile device.¹⁶

Teens and Self-Definition

“The time of adolescence is a time when one is confronted with the task of ‘self definition’ and how culture and narratives may influence identity growth and one’s self-perception of identity.”¹⁷ With the use of the personal device and the access to applications and the

m-learning model of instruction, teens are playing a key role in the creators of knowledge that can be shared.

The authors of *Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism* believe that, “The combination of stimulating audio and visual cues, along with written and interactive content will reinforce the ability to comprehend and achieve greater literacy while learning a language.”¹⁸ Visual literacy and the integration of sound and motion are effective ways to appeal to teens. Research shows that this target demographic is continuously connected to their mobile devices, which makes designing an app the most appropriate medium.

The target audience for this app, tweens and teens, are self-explorers who are developing their own sense of what defines their identity. The app will not be targeted for younger children. An important component of this app is how the audience interacts, create material and shares through social media to show their accomplishments and their sense of identity through their language acquisition exercises.

Research Statement

Heritage languages are an integral part in the identity construct of second generation teens of immigrant parents. I explored strengthening this heritage language through the creation of a Lebanese Arabic language learning application that is tailored to teaching the *heritage learner* the intricacies of a complex language while connecting them to the culture and its many facets. The application is called *HAKINI ARABI*, which is an Arabic phrase that means “*Talk to me in Arabic*” and it is typically reflective of a Lebanese dialect that is common among immigrant families living within the Lebanese Diaspora.



DISCOVERY

Intricacies of the Arabic Language

This project involved many facets. First and foremost, the Arabic language has many intricacies. Arabic is written right to left, causing a major shift in the mind of users as they engage in the user experience of the application. The other challenge was to find an appropriate balance between teaching the Modern Standard Arabic while still helping students gain a thorough understanding of the colloquial dialect. The mastering and practice of the spoken language will engage the learner in becoming engaged with their heritage language.

The Arabic language has 28 letters that vary in the way they are written in the beginning, middle and at the end of sentences causing an added layer of visual recognition for the 28 letters of the alphabet.¹⁹

Medial forms	Initial forms	Isolated forms		
ا	ا	ا	Alif	A
ب	ب	ب	Beh	B
ت	ت	ت	Teh	C
ث	ث	ث	Theh	TH
ج	ج	ج	Jim	G
ح	ح	ح	Hah	H
خ	خ	خ	Khah	KH
د	د	د	Dal	D
ذ	ذ	ذ	Thal	THA
ر	ر	ر	Reh	R
ز	ز	ز	Zeh	Z
س	س	س	Sin	S
ش	ش	ش	Shin	SH
ص	ص	ص	Sad	SA
ض	ض	ض	Dad	
ط	ط	ط	Tah	T
ظ	ظ	ظ	Thah	
ع	ع	ع	Ayn	
غ	غ	غ	Chayn	
ف	ف	ف	Feh	F
ق	ق	ق	Qaf	Q
ك	ك	ك	Kaf	K
ل	ل	ل	Lam	L
م	م	م	Mim	M
ن	ن	ن	Nun	N
ه	ه	ه	Heh	H
و	و	و	Waw	W
ي	ي	ي	Yeh	Y
آ	آ	آ	Alif Maksudra	
ة	ة	ة	Teh Marbuta	
ء	ء	ء	Hamza	
أ	أ	أ	Alif Madda	
أ	أ	أ	Alif Hamza Above	
ؤ	ؤ	ؤ	Waw Hamza	
إ	إ	إ	Alif Hamza Below	
ئ	ئ	ئ	Alif Maksudra Hamza	

The Arabic Script

Arabic is written from right to left, and the numerals are written from left to right.

Some Arabic letters change their basic form significantly (a) while others do not (b).

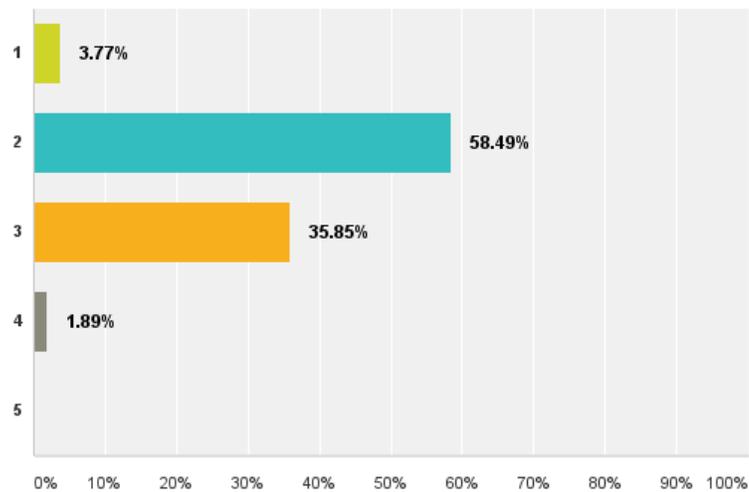
Arabic short vowels, which are usually added above or below letters, are often not shown.

Survey

In order to better inform my thesis, I conducted a survey of 53 first generation Lebanese immigrant participants living within the United States (or in another English speaking country). Most of the participants had children ages 5-18. I decided to survey parents to understand the nature of learning a heritage language and what tools they have used and tested. The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey. Below are diagrams of five of the 10 questions asked.

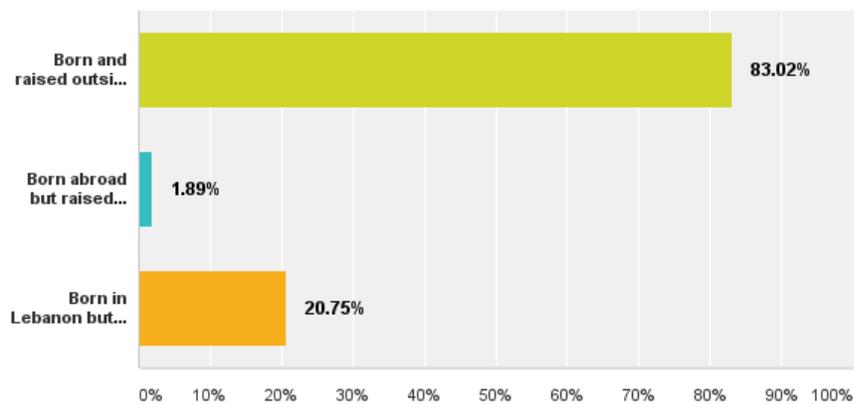
Q1 How many children do you have?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



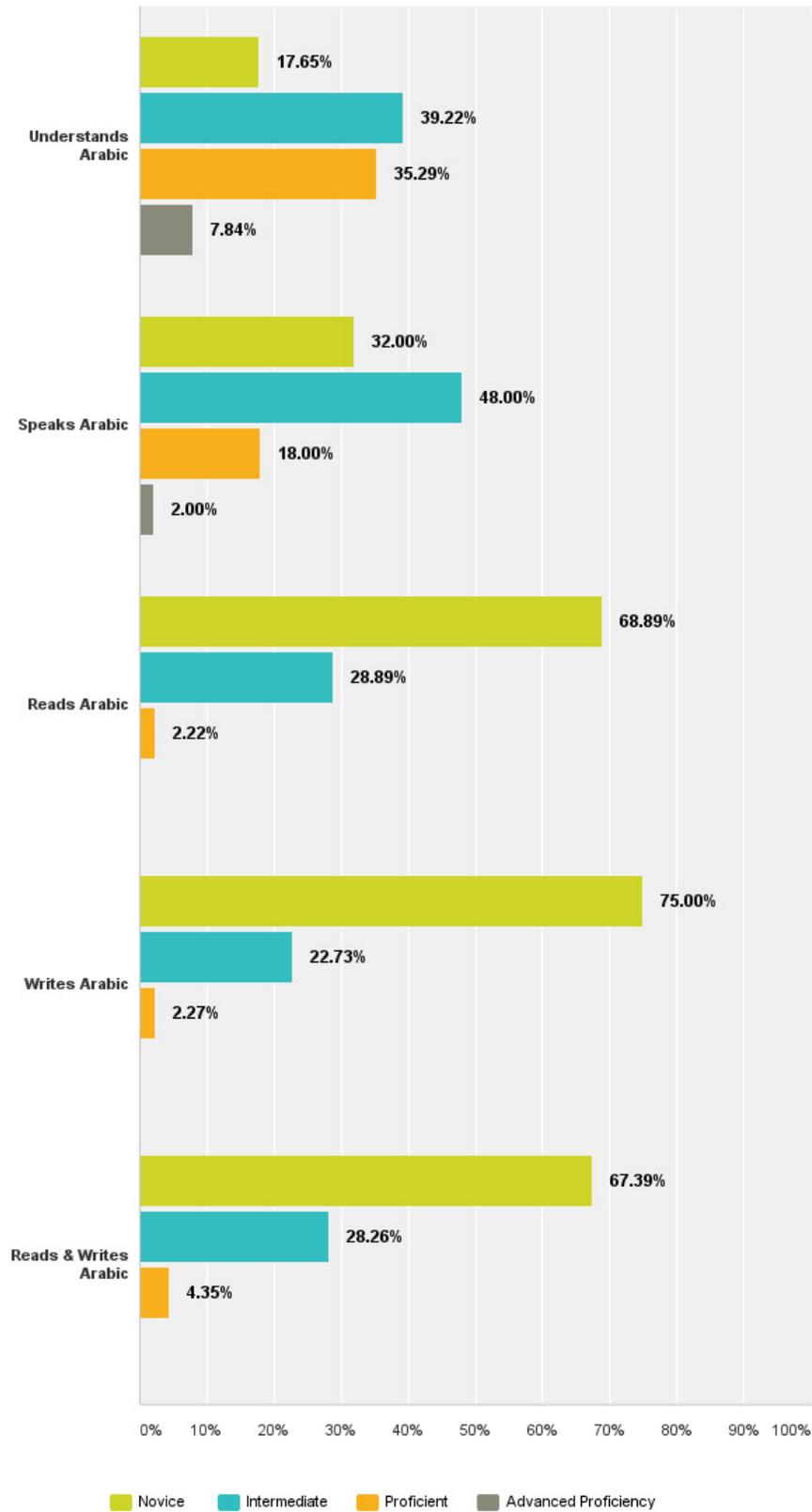
Q3 Which of the following best applies to your children?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



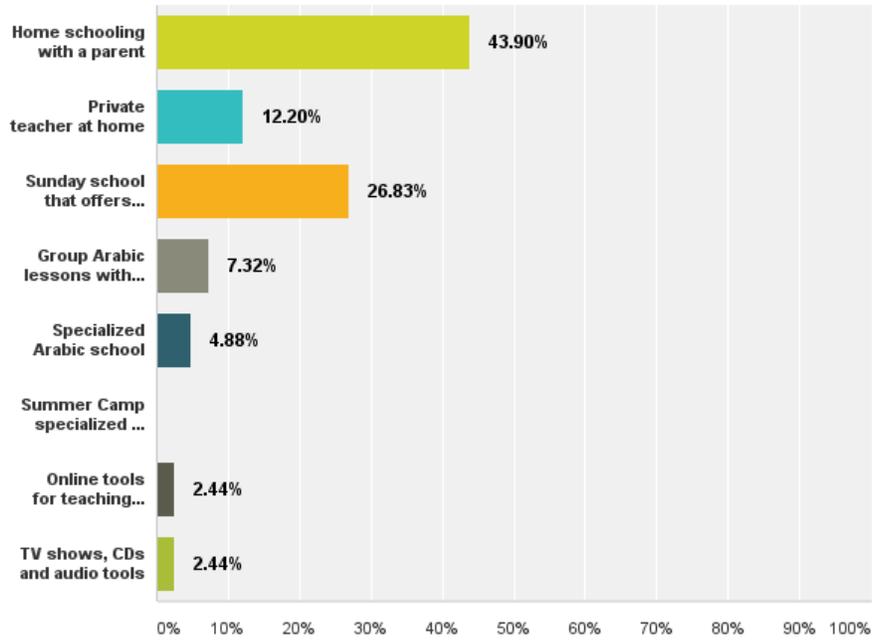
Q4 How would you describe your children's proficiency in Arabic?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 1



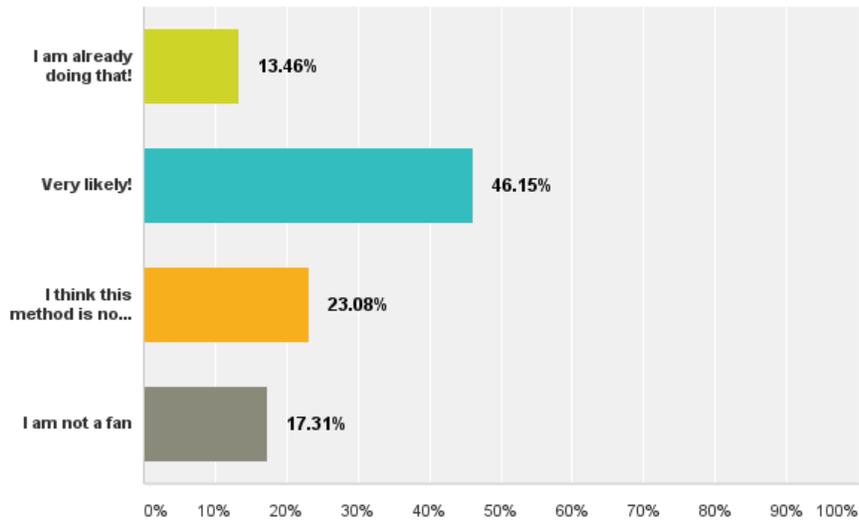
Q5 How is your child being taught Arabic?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 12



Q8 How likely are you to use an online app to teach your children Arabic?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 1



Findings and Challenges

It was evident through the survey responses that parents struggled to find appropriate solutions to strengthen their children's heritage language. Almost 44% of the parents said they home-schooled their children when it comes to Arabic. And it was interesting to see that most children understood Arabic but when it came to reading and writing the language, the number of children proficient in that aspect was extremely low. The survey proved the need for an innovative system where the teens can interact with the language and acquire both the Spoken and the Modern Standard versions of Arabic.

“

Not enough meaningful apps for older kids. Most apps are too childish to engage older kids.

“

The difference between formal (foshah) and spoken Arabic.

“

The problem is the spoken Lebanese Arabic is different than what we read and write and that is the biggest challenge! In addition, our dialects vary from Arab country to the other.

“

Arabic Schools are not available in close proximity. Online tools are not helpful since they are for beginner students and this does not apply to us!

“

Apps such as Duolingo are interesting to explore while learning a new language.

The Right Teaching Method

A big undertaking in this project was deciding what kind of teaching method I was going to follow in order to accomplish the goals for heritage language learners. Kagan states that “Heritage language learners, because of their long exposure to the language, are good candidates for gaining such [professional: superior or higher] proficiency more quickly if the instruction they are offered meets their needs.”²⁰ The focus should not only be on the linguistics of the language but also on the cultural affinity to the language itself. Kagan further suggests that in order for a heritage language instruction to be effective, it must include cultural identity enhancers such as poetry or film.²¹ By using cultural connectors within the content of the app, I will enhance my target audience’s affinity and relevance to promoting their sense of identity.

The teaching method that I am implementing is mobile learning by creating an application that can be accessed from a teen’s mobile phone. The app features cultural based modular lessons that are culturally focused and relevant to Lebanon. Thus, achieving a dual goal, of learning the components of the language while enhancing the cultural relevance to the country of origin. The app will also use audio instruction to develop and encourage teens to practice their colloquial Arabic skills.

The cultural based modules will be divided into 3 levels. Users of the app will be self-directed learners that can set a specific daily goal to engage with the learning process. The modules will be short and grouped according to clear structured categories. All the content will be culturally relevant to Lebanon.

- **The Basic set of modules:**

- Reinforcing the 28 letters within the Arabic language with emphasis on how the letters vary in the beginning, the middle and at the end of the words. Practicing writing and pronouncing the letters.
- Learning numbers and how to construct number structures. Practicing writing and pronouncing the numbers.
- Colors
- Months and days of the week
- Learning the naming of family members
- Traditional dishes and food items

- Weather Lingo
- Clothing Items
- Major cities and landmarks
- Courtesy words

- **The Proficient set of modules:**

- Word structure: combining letters to form words
- Speaking through guided simple conversations
- Learning pop culture phrases and idioms
- Learning Arabic songs through Musically

- **The Advanced set of modules:**

- Sentence structure: combining words into sentences
- Speaking through guided long conversations
- Learning famous poems
- Guided reading of simple passages
- Grammar structure

All the above modules will be short task oriented section with Arabic audio to guide the user through the lessons.

The app will also feature a badge and a reward system that will engage users into finishing modules and unlocking the next system of badges. The badges system is designed to refer to the landmark locations in Lebanon.

Audiences & Personas

Hakini Arabi is a self-directed language learning application for teens of Lebanese descent that are interested and curious in retaining and preserving their heritage language and consequently enhancing their identity construct. These teens live within family environments where their heritage language and culture is relevant. Like other teens, technology is part of their daily life; they interact with it purposefully to gain access to education, games and fun tasks. They are passionate about their causes and engage in social media to share parts of their lives with their friends.

I explored three different Personas for this app.

Persona 1:

Name: Adam | **Age:** 16 | **Location:** Ellicott City, Maryland

Background: Adam is a Sophomore in High School. He juggles academics and athletics as a member of both the Varsity Soccer and Lacrosse teams.

Type of learner: Visual, he prefers to see information and visualize relationships.

Goal: He wants to hone his Arabic speaking skills to interact with the different members of his family in the United States and in Lebanon.

Adam is an actively engaged online user of mobile devices. He is continuously connected with friends and enjoys social settings. He is busy with school and sports but enjoys family get together. He understand the language well and is able to acknowledge the humorous jokes. He wants to be able to speak Arabic with his grand parents, cousins and friends more fluently. He tends to weigh words before he utters them out due to the use of English more than Arabic. He doesn't like to feel that learning Arabic should be an added burden to his already busy school work schedule.

Favorite Apps: Snapchat, Instagram, IOS Messenger, Youtube

Usability Needs: Needs something accessible on his phone and fun enough so that it doesn't feel like homework. He doesn't like apps that allow you to turn the screen. He dims his brightness to save battery for his phone.

Persona 2:

Name: Lilia | **Age:** 11 | **Location:** Orange County, California

Background: Lilia is a fifth grader in Elementary school. She is a dancer and a pianist.

Type of learner: Reading and writing, interacting with text is more powerful to her than hearing or seeing images.

Goal: She is very inquisitive and wants to actively learn Arabic in both its written and spoken forms

Lilia has an ipod and uses it to connect to the internet and to listen to music. She is a planner and likes to schedule and plan for everything from her dance classes all the way to specific school tasks. She enjoys reading books and is a skilled reader and writer. She is a self-starter in learning a new skill. She is extremely self apprehensive about talking Arabic in front of others.

Favorite Apps: Pinterest, Spotify, Tumblr, IOS Messages

Usability Needs: Needs to know how long she will spend on a task. Needs to customize many aspects of her online presence.

Persona 3:

Name: Nayla | **Age:** 54 | **Location:** Washington DC

Background: Nayla is a Finance manager with two teen children

Type of learner: Auditory learner, she retains information by listening to it.

Goal: She is looking for a guided app to encourage her children to practice their native Arabic language

Nayla is a busy working mother of a 13 year old girl and a 17 year old boy. She is a first generation immigrant of Lebanese descent. She settled with her husband in the DC area when her children were young. She is socially engaged with her Lebanese community through social gatherings. She tried to teach her children Arabic at home, but she didn't have the patience to make them persist in learning it. She feels that it is very important to make them stay connected to the family and she is always on the lookout for a new teaching method that might work.

Favorite Apps: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Lumosity

Usability Needs: Needs engaging content that will interest her. Likes audio cues on an app and likes to engage socially through her mobile device.

Please refer to Appendix A to view the Personas.

Information Architecture

Establishing the cultural-based modular system as a structured learning method made my approach clearer in setting up the wish list for *Hakini Arabi* which included:

- Sign Up for a new user through e-mail/ Sign up through Instagram and/or Facebook
- Sign In
- Choose the level of Proficiency
- Take a short assessment
- Set a daily goal for playing
- Change settings
- Activate voice controls
- Choose learning module
- Earn badges
- Share with Friends
- Challenge friends
- Set up chat rooms with friends
- Search for a term or word
- See your dashboards
- Promote through social channels
- Write out letter shapes on the screen
- Send hand written graphics and messages to social media
- Rate the App

Establishing the Information Architecture for the App was key in determining how users navigate the content on the site and how they can perform tasks within the app. With the above wish list and the modular lessons outlined on p. 13 and 14 of this documents, I performed a task-oriented paper card sort to 5 users. The use of a card sort helps the users categorize the tasks into categories. I observed and analyzed thoroughly the findings and determined what the Information Architecture for the App was going to be. The IA was categorized into 5 main categories. I created the wire-frames for the App and the website based on the finding of the card sort.

Please refer to Appendix B to view the App's and Website's IA.

User Testing

Based on the wire-frames for the App, I created a low fidelity click-able prototype through Invision and tested it on a group of 6 teens within my main target audience.

I performed the user testing in person using an iPhone or an iPod since these will be the main devices my target audience use. I observed, recorded and guided the users when needed.

I assumed that given the nature of the Arabic type and the way the words flow in a calligraphic manner, I should create the App and make it designed primarily in a landscape format. That caused frustration among most of my users. It is worth noting that had I not performed user testing, I would have never anticipated that user frustration. This made me go back to the drawing board and refine the app to establish it in a portrait version without any screen rotation feature.

- User A | 11 years old

This user started by trying to sign up as a new user and linking her Instagram account to the app. With this user, I noticed that she didn't like accessing too many fields of information in order to gain access into the app. She wanted to dive in.

- User B | 13 years old

This user started by pressing the blue 'I'm new' button due to the color tonality that is brighter than the sign in button. He stopped and said I want to 'Sign in' as a member and went in to change his settings and choose a daily goal.

- User C | 16 years old

I guided this user to their dashboard and asked him to experiment with learning a letter. He scrolled down to see all the 28 modules of letters and choose one in the middle section. Looked at the letter and the matching picture and then clicked the 'pen' icon. He looked happy as the screen moved to reveal a new screen where you can use your finger to trace the letter.

- User D | 15 years old

This user expressed her appreciation of the colors of the app and expressed how she liked the 'blackboard' effect in the background of the app. She scrolled through the screens and pressed the badges screen and clicked some badges.

- User E | 44 years old

She clicked the lesson icon in the bottom nav bar and then clicked the landmarks module to see what it included.

- User F | 12 years old

This user decided to change their profile picture from the setting section within the collapsible menu. She took a selfie and saved it as her profile picture.

Please refer to Appendix C to view the App Wire-frames.



Mood Board

The mood board was the first graphic element I created for this project. It was inspired by the streets of Lebanon, the graffiti, the iconic brick houses, the Arabic typography and the dual presence of Arabic along-side another language in all the facets of life of the country. The mood board was my guiding element that made me ensure all aspects of my project were an outcome of this style. I referred to it many times within the process and it always guided me back to authentic nature of Hakini Arabi.

Please refer to Appendix D to view the Mood Board.

Name

The name, *Hakini Arabi* was inspired from a popular Arabic phrase spoken in a Lebanese Dialect that meant *talk to me in Arabic*. It is a common phrase that you will hear within many family constructs that are living within the Lebanese Diaspora. You will hear it around dinner tables and as parents urge their children to converse in their heritage language.

Logo Development

I started conceptualizing the idea of the logo as soon as I was done with writing the draft proposal of my thesis. I knew that I wanted the logo to signify dialogue and a relationship between two languages. I also knew that I wanted the logo to utilize the Arabic font. After refining my creative direction, I started creating hand-drawn sketches of different visual executions. I experimented with working on visual explorations that signify conversation, and a dual presence of both the Arabic and English types together.

My final logo was a combination of a symbol and typeface. The symbol was composed of two speech bubbles intertwined together. One pointed towards the right direction signifying how we write Arabic – right to left; while the other speech bubble was pointing to the left, the way we write English - left to right. The bubbles were intertwined to signify a conversation. And the Arabic bubble was larger in size, placing more emphasis on the

Arabic words that spell 'Arabic' within the circular form. The circular form also focused the Arabic language into perspective since this is the language to be explored and learned throughout the App.

Please refer to Appendix E to view the Logo Development.

Style Guide

The style guide contained the building blocks of the project's identity. It established the graphic elements that I worked with through the project. The Style guide was the second element along with the mood board, that I repeatedly referred to for every element I created for the App.

Primary Background

I created a main background for the app that is inspired from the grunge walls of Lebanon. The walls are not perfect, they are textured and layered. The background also served to give the feeling of a blackboard where all the learning was taking place for the App. This background is widely used within the App design.

Colors

The colors were inspired from Lebanon. The terracotta rooftop houses are an iconic symbol of the traditional Lebanese Architecture. As the country was being rebuilt after the war, the new architecture recreated building and houses with the terracotta rooftops. The beige colors are inspired from the vaulted homes of Lebanon. The color of the sea is vibrant all along the coast of Lebanon. The blueness of the sea is an integral part of the country's structure. The black color is inspired from the textured walls of Lebanon full of graffiti and layered messages.

Typography

With my target audience in mind, I wanted to choose fonts that are modern and humanist without being traditional and old-fashioned. My project utilizes both Arabic and English typography and I was very particular about choosing these two fonts. Since Arabic and English scripts are representative of different languages, they also have different inherit letter structures. It was very important for me to work with two fonts that adapted well

together and felt visually well-structured together without adding clutter to the screens of the App.

ENGLISH TYPE: UBUNTU

For the English Font, I used Ubuntu, a san-serif font created by the London-based type foundry Dalton Maag. The font is modern, with clean curves that complement the structure of certain letters within the Arabic language. The x-heights within the font work well with the letters of the Arabic font. The font has thirteen different weights making it easy to apply to the many different facets of the App.

ARABIC TYPE: SE GG TWO

For the Arabic font, I used SE GG TWO, created by Boutrous as a unique range of Arabic typeface with a modern and simple geometric style. While the fonts follow the typical shapes of the Arabic language, they achieve good harmony alongside the san-serif latin typefaces.

Photography

I am using authentic photos of Lebanon that show the true nature of the country. Layered, not perfect but still very charming. The photos are from a photo bank for Lebanese pictures called *Live love Lebanon*.

Please refer to Appendix F to view the Style Guide.

The App Prototype: *Hakini Arabi*

It is so exciting to see the actual designed prototype come to life as a culmination of the research, the discovery and the design phases. The app is refined according to the analysis of the user testing and applies all the style guide design elements listed above. Many of the learning modules are exemplified within the prototype.

Hakini Arabi was designed in Sketch which is a vector based work flow that offers multiple pages and art-boards and makes it very easy to create prototypes in relevance to mobile applications. I built the actual workable prototype in Invision, where you can see the actual live product as close to a real live app as possible. The prototype shows lesson structure

and how a user can interact with the modules. The most prominent section of the app is the modules structure where you see the connection between learning the traditional Modern Standard Arabic Language while maintaining the emphasis on the spoken aspect of Arabic. The major challenge I faced with Invision, is that it doesn't enable audio applications.

Please refer to Appendix G to view the complete set of Design Prototypes.

The Website: *Hakini Arabi*

The website is created as a promotional piece to market the App. The CMS used for the app is Wordpress and it houses the click-able prototype for the App. The website design uses a single page layout that is mobile friendly. The website has links to the social media platforms that promote the App. Hakini Arabi is active on Snapchat with geofilters designed specifically to celebrate the landmarks that a user unlocks within the app. Instagram is another platform that engages the primary target audience and Hakini Arabi is active within it as well. Hakini Arabi is active on Facebook to reach out to the parents and promote the website and the App.

Please refer to Appendix H to view the Website and the Social Media designs.



Budget

Sketch App Membership: \$99 a year

Invision App: \$15/month

Web Domain: \$15

Hosting Services: \$120 yearly

Website templates: \$45

Marketing Material: Iphone cases - \$20 x 6

Distribution

First and foremost, I plan to work on the development of the full version of Hakini Arabi and I plan to find a sufficient budget in order to bring it to fruition and have it available to download through the App store!

Since my app is targeted towards a very specific audience, I aim to market the app to Lebanese Embassies in English speaking countries. Alumni clubs of Lebanese schools and Universities are socially active in every city within the United States, reaching out to these groups and marketing the app will prove to be another valuable channel for distribution. Social media, particularly twitter and Facebook's business page are also major channels that I plan to strategically increase content in so that the presence of the App can be more credible.

Conclusion

Preserving one's heritage language is crucial in one's identity. *Hakini Arabi* aims to give second-generation immigrants the chance to feel at ease while connecting to their country of origin and to make sense of a basic part of who they are.

My original idea for this thesis was a result of a personal quest. I hope my children, Lilia and Adam, will benefit from *Hakini Arabi* and value their native language as a source of richness to their overall identity and the future paths that they tread on.

Only then will the words of Jibran Khalil Jibran, a Lebanese American immigrant poet, artist and writer (1883-1931) mean as much to them as they do to me.

"Here I am, a youth, a youthful tree whose roots were plucked from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here and I would be fruitful."

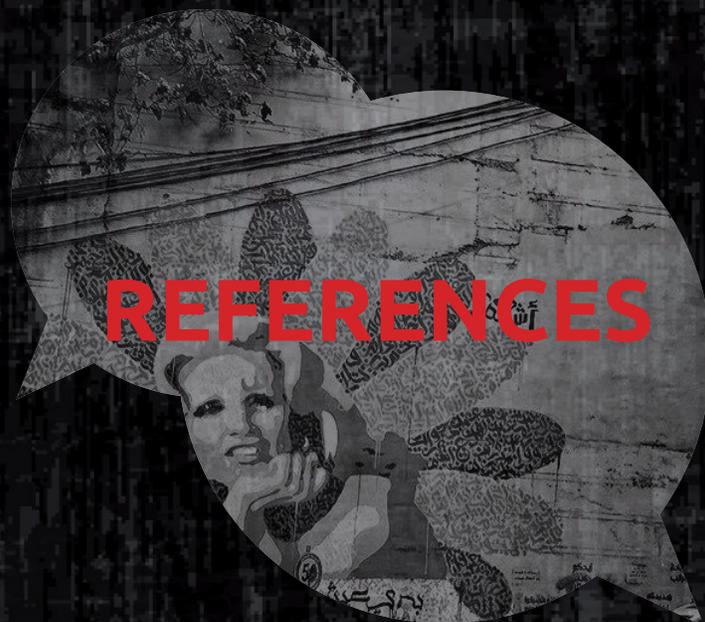
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank Amy Pointer, my thesis chair for her encouragement at every step of the way and for her guidance into helping me bring this project to life. And thank you to TJ O'Donnell for reinforcing that "I am writing the chapter and not the book." I could not have done this without you both.

Thank you to all my family and friends for all the conversations and insights into why this topic is so important. Mostly, thank you to my mother and father for their love, support and blessings.

And to Adam and Lilia, who are the rays of sunshine that spreads through my heart.

This is for you. You are in each word I wrote and in every design I created. Last but not least, to my love, Samer, for his unwavering support and for always being my #1 fan.



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Appendix A | Personas

Adam

16 Years | Student



Background

Adam is a Sophomore in High School. He juggles academics and athletics as a member of the Varsity Soccer and Lacrosse teams.

Type of learner

Visual, he prefers to see information and visualize relationships.

Goal

He wants to hone his Arabic speaking skills to interact with the different members of his family in the United States and in Lebanon.

Usability Needs

Needs something accessible on his phone and fun enough so that it doesn't feel like homework. He doesn't like apps that allow you to turn the screen. He dims his brightness to save battery for his phone.

Appendix A | Personas

Lilia

11 Years | Student



Background

Lilia is a fifth grader in Elementary school. She is a dancer and a pianist.

Type of learner

Reading and writing, interacting with text is more powerful to her than hearing or seeing images.

Goal

She is very inquisitive and wants to actively learn Arabic in both its written and spoken forms

Usability Needs

Needs to know how long she will spend on a task. Needs to customize many aspects of her online presence.

Appendix A | Personas

Nayla

54 Years | Financial Manager



Background

Nayla is a Finance manager with two teen children. She is a first generation immigrant having lived in Washington DC for 20 years.

Type of learner

Auditory learner, she retains information by listening to it.

Goal

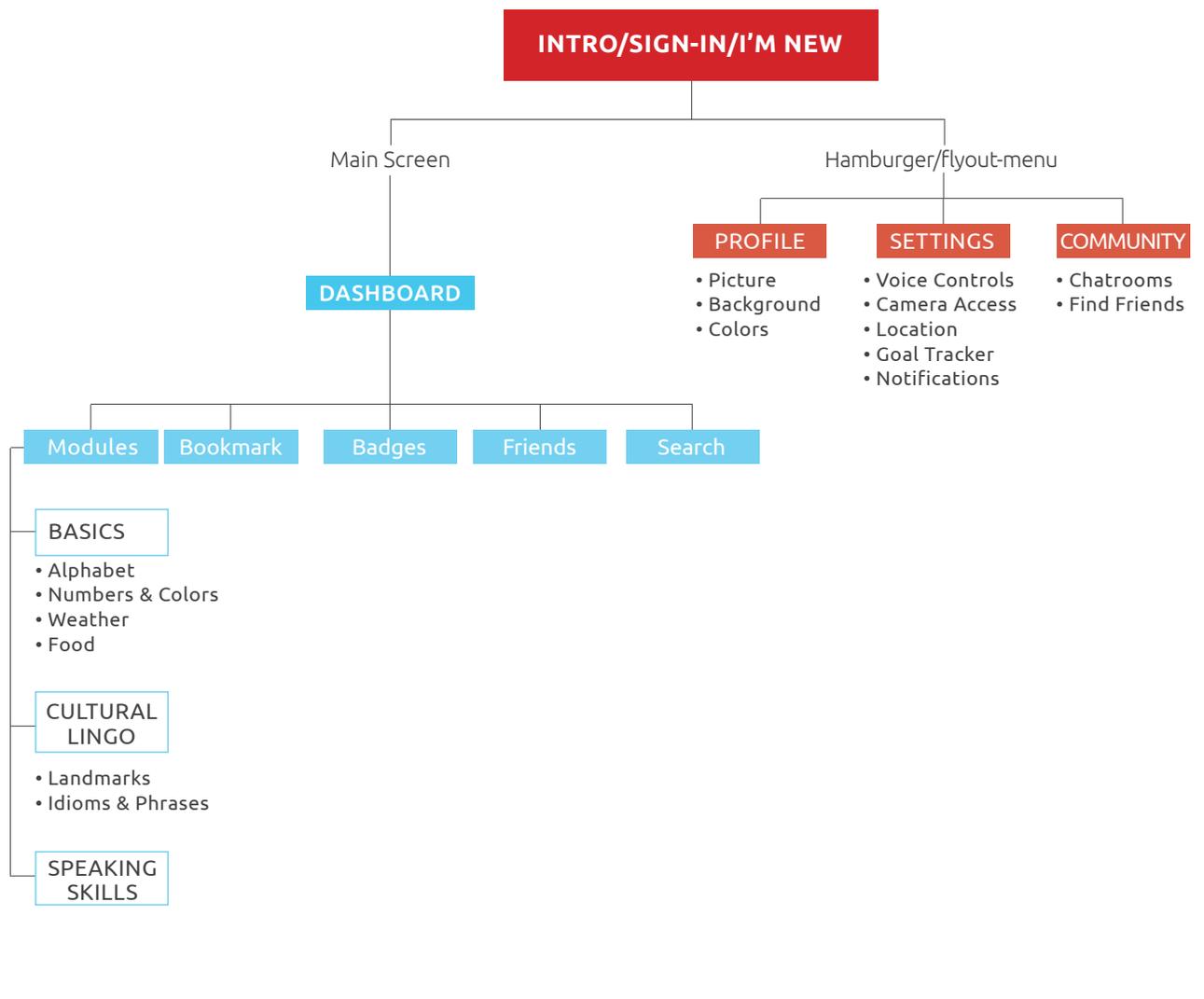
She is looking for a guided app to encourage her children to practice their native Arabic language.

Usability Needs

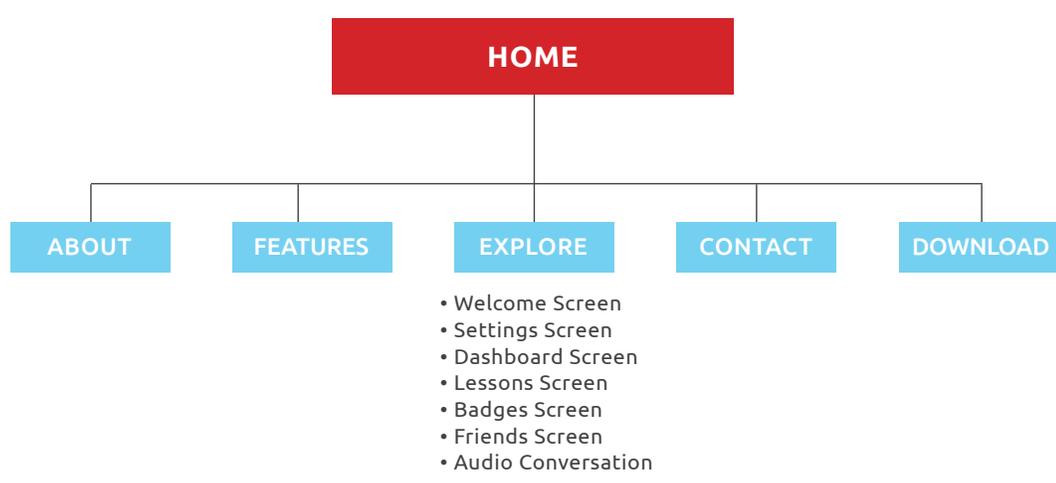
Needs engaging content that will interest her. Likes audio cues on an app and likes to engage socially through her mobile device.

Appendix B

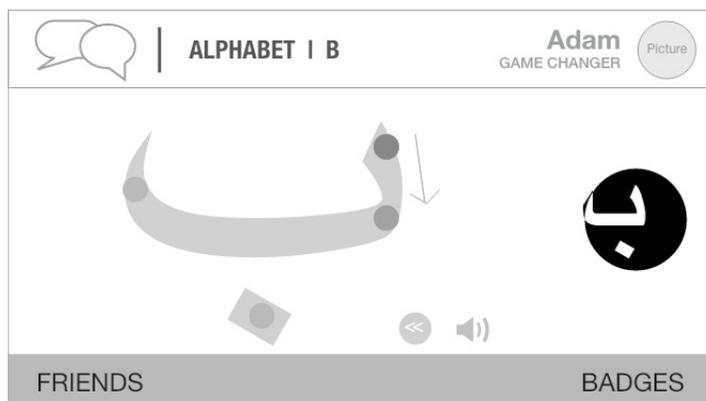
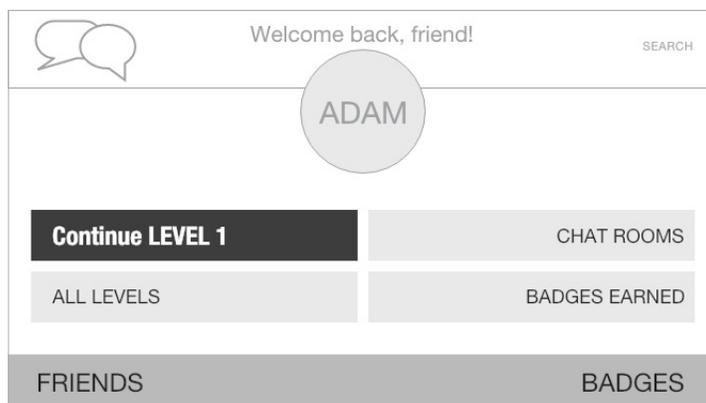
Application Information Architecture



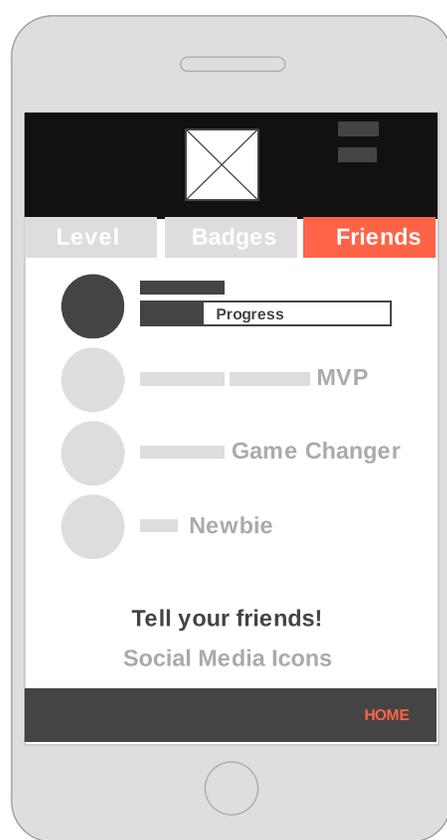
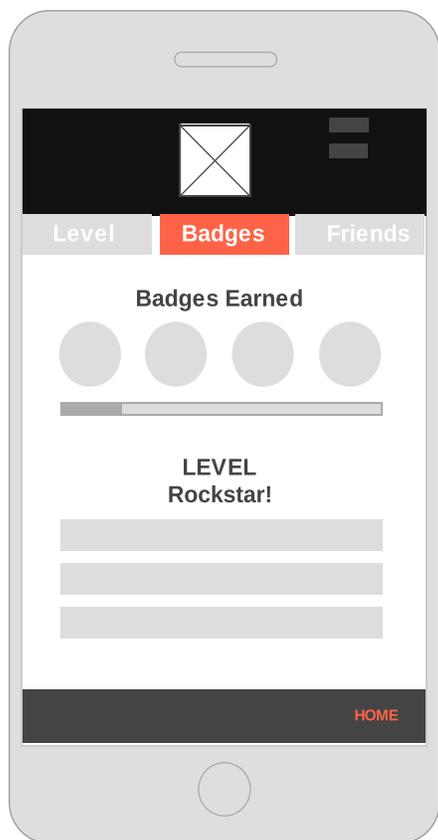
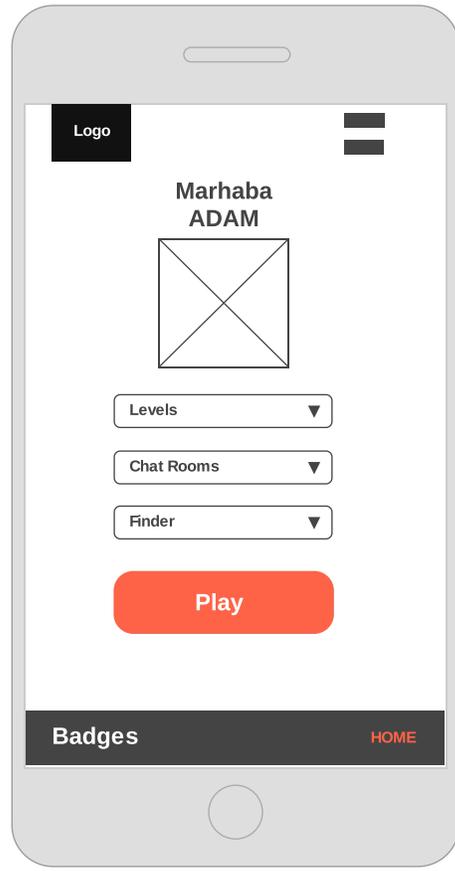
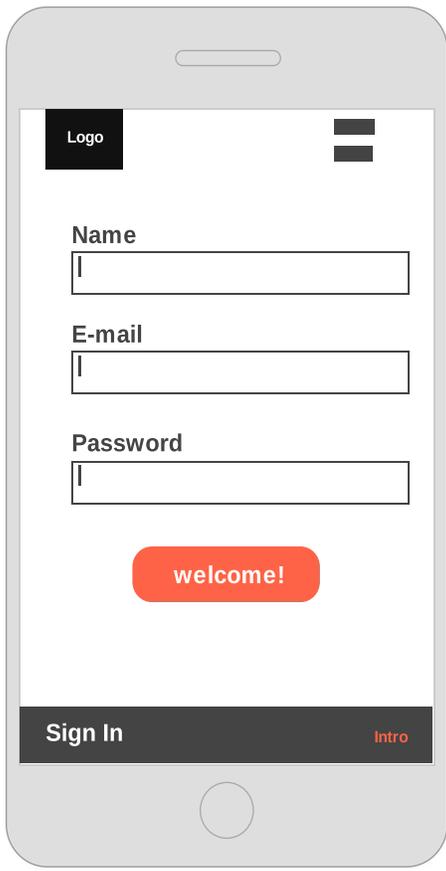
Website Information Architecture



Appendix C | App Wire-frames - Round 1



Appendix C | App Wireframes - Round 2



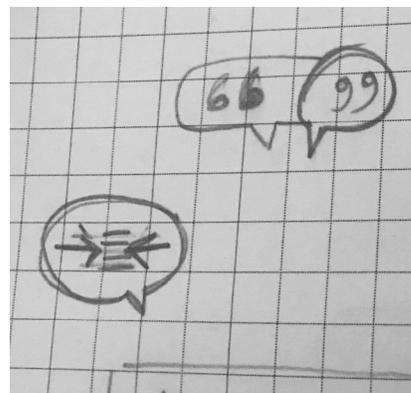
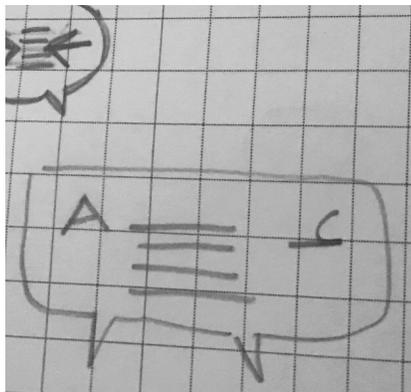
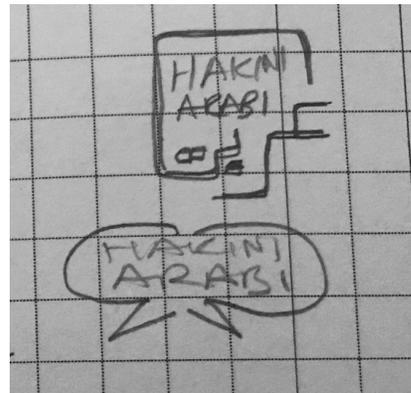
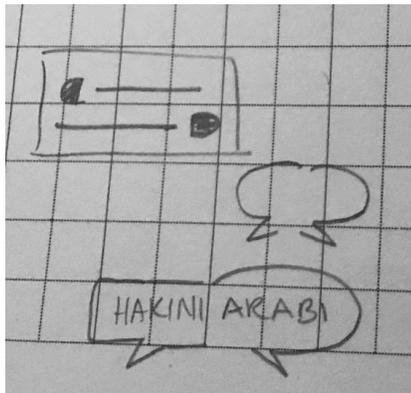
Appendix D | Moodboard

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ر و ف ق ع ء

حكيني عربي
Hakini Arabi



Appendix E | Logo Sketches



Appendix E | Final Logo

Main Logo - Center Stack



Main Logo - Bi-lingual version



Main Logo - Reversed



Main Logo - Grey Scale

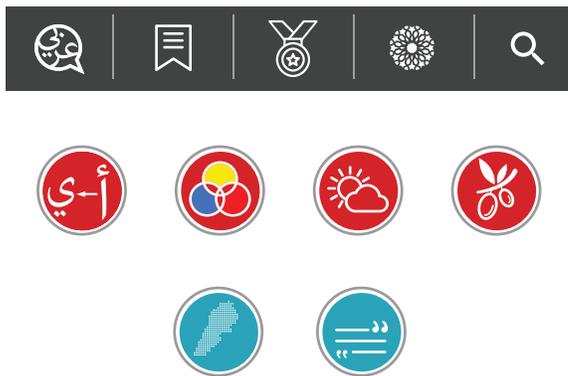


Appendix F | Style Guide

Typography



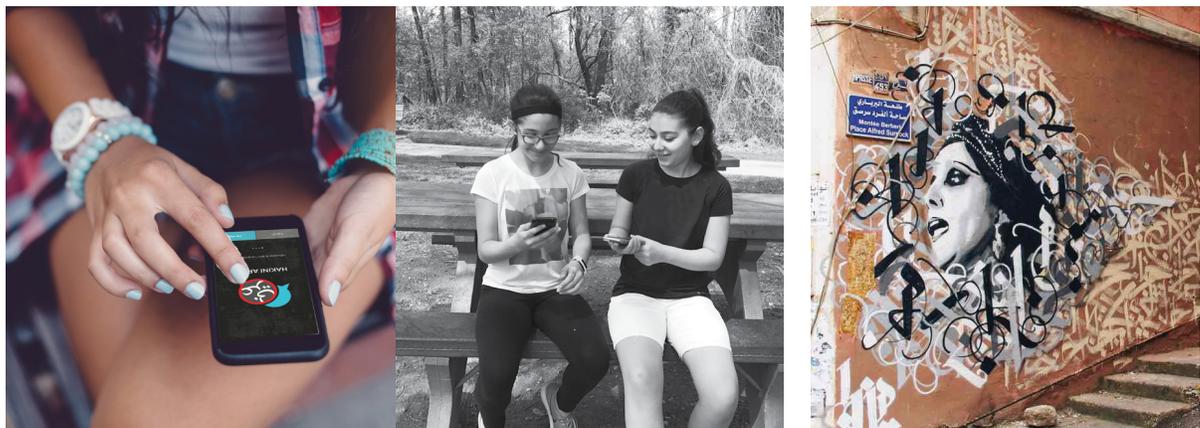
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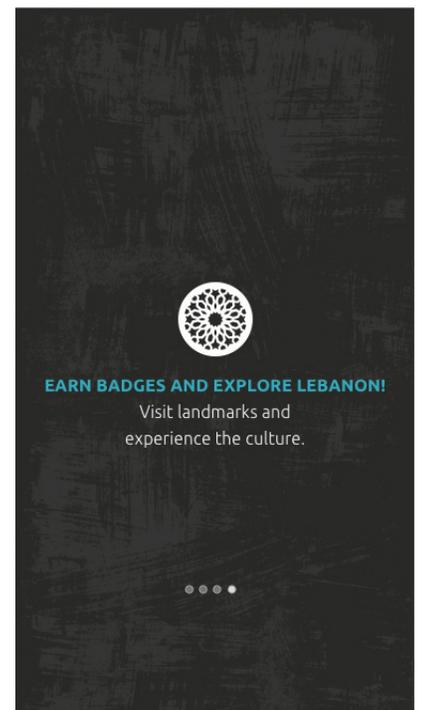
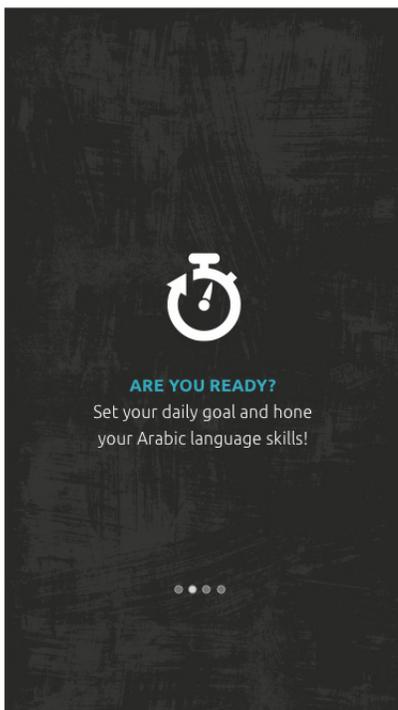
Color Palette



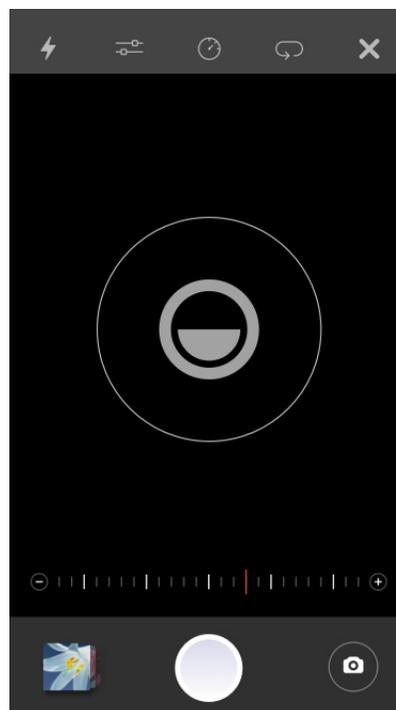
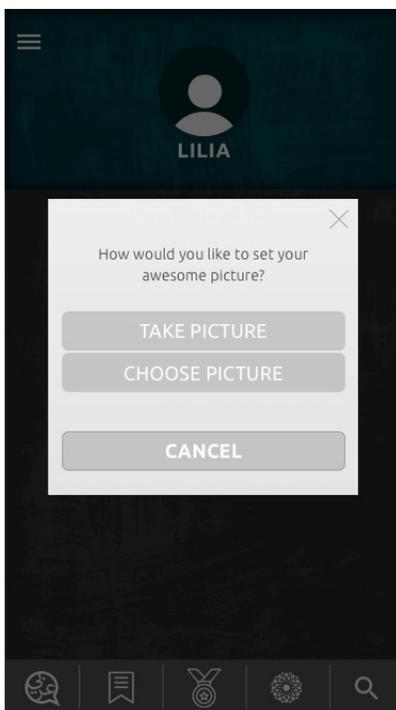
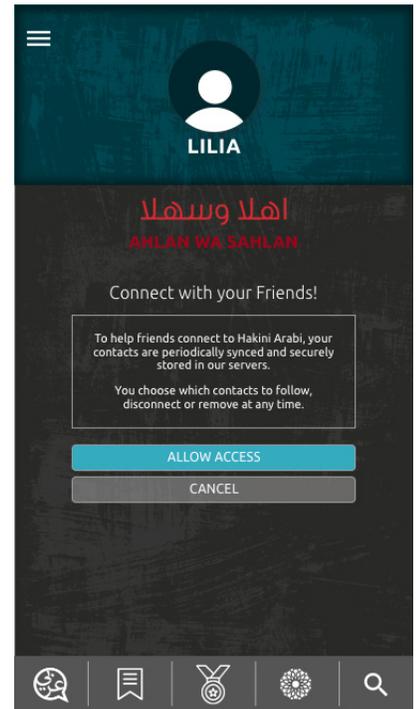
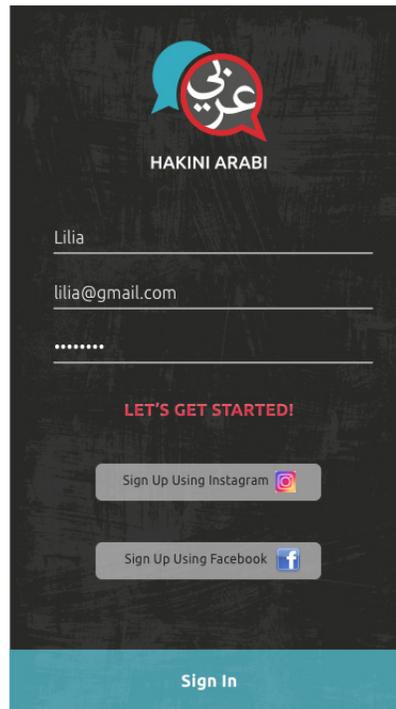
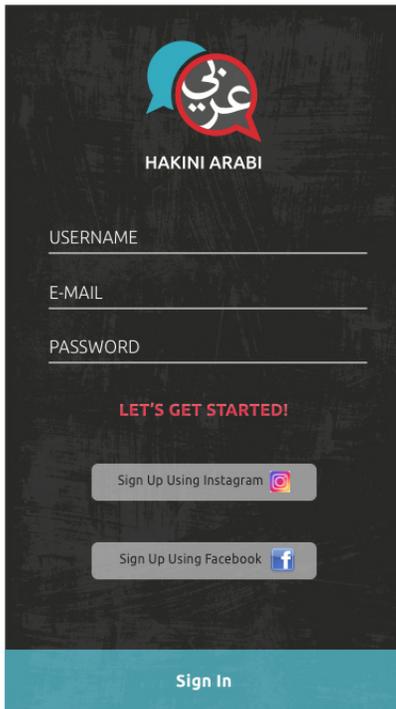
Photography



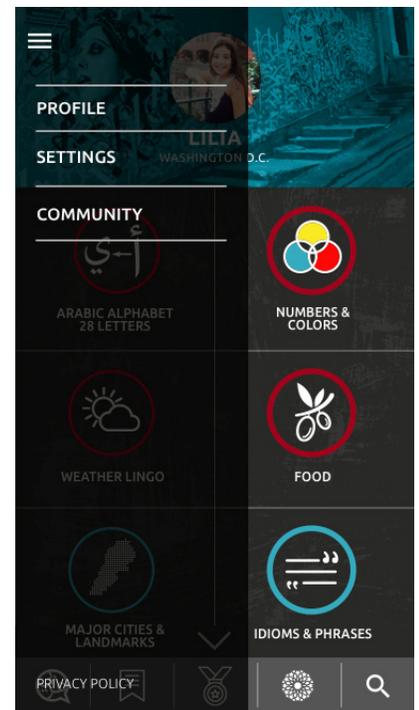
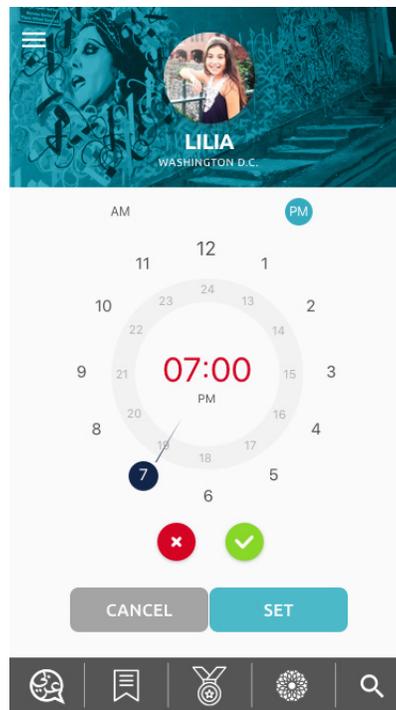
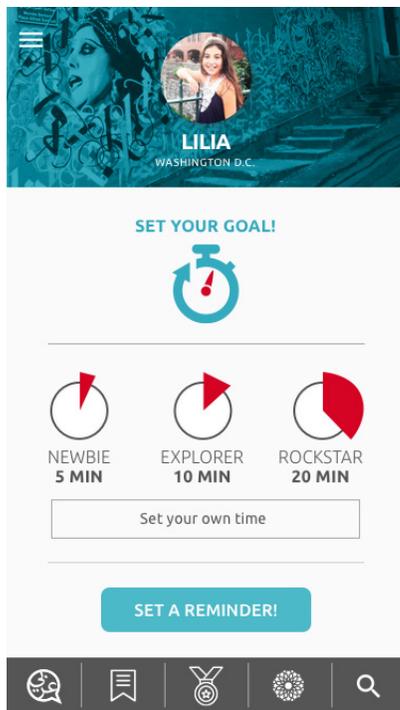
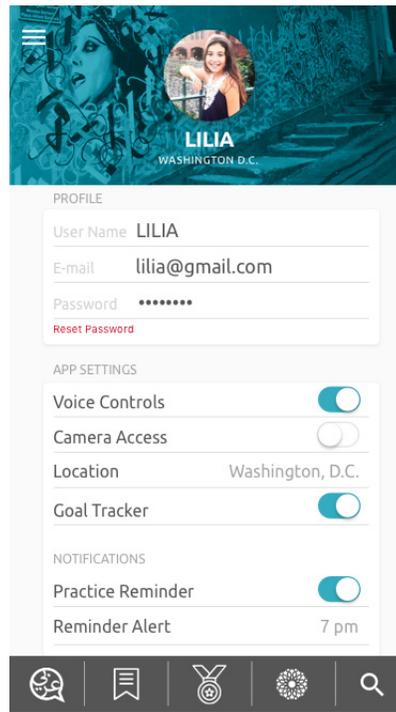
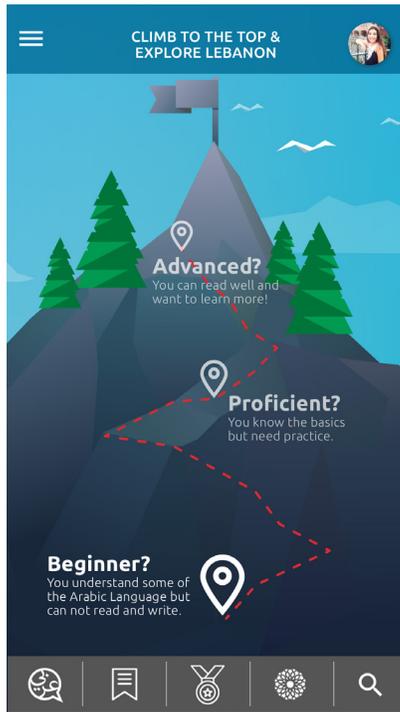
Appendix G | App Prototype



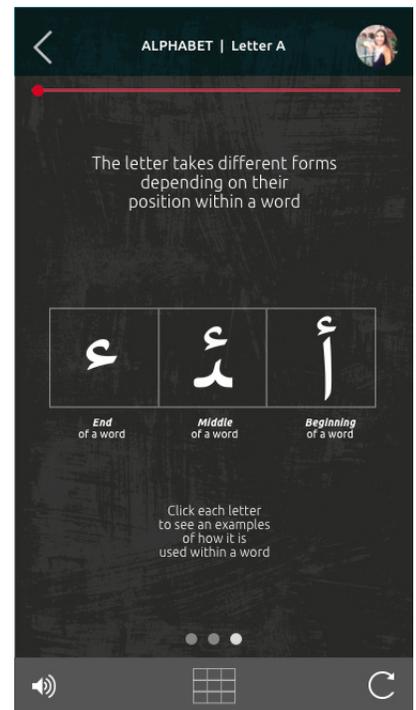
Appendix G | App Prototype



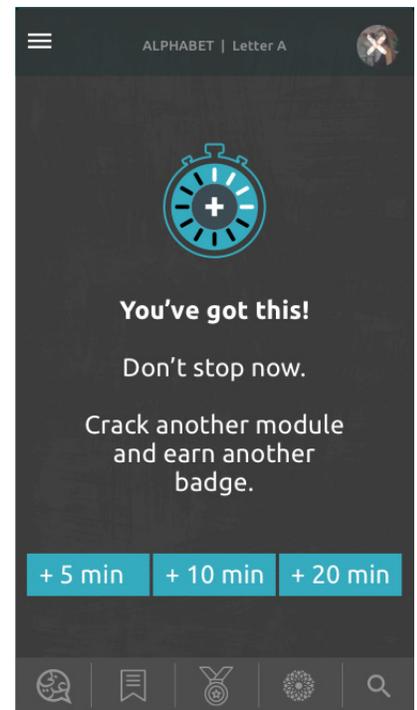
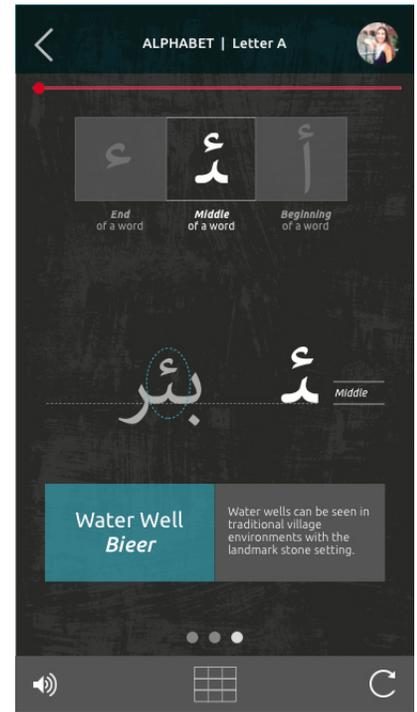
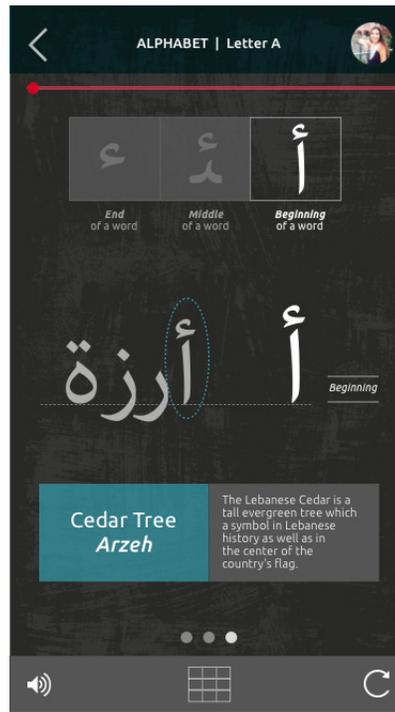
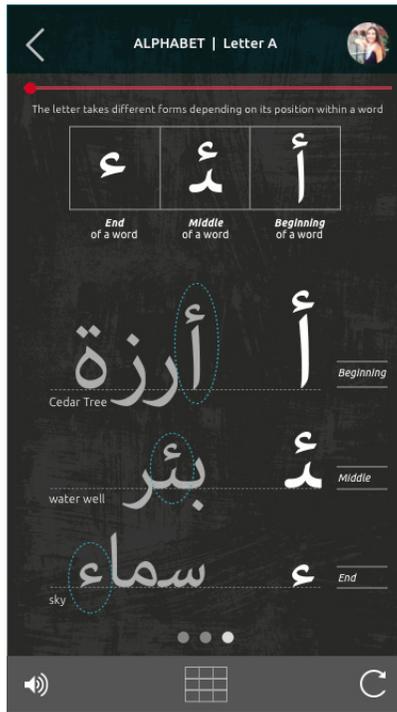
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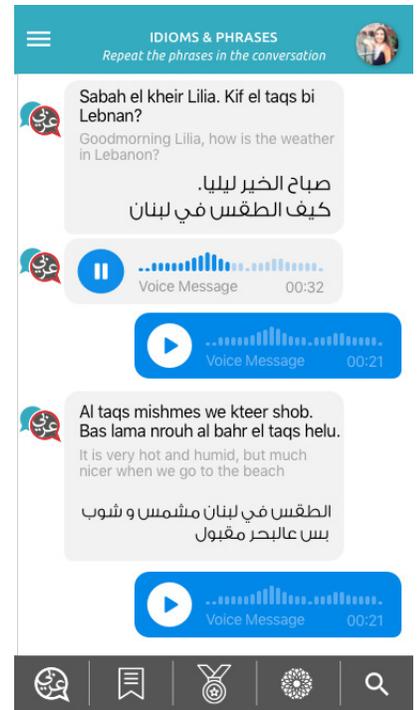
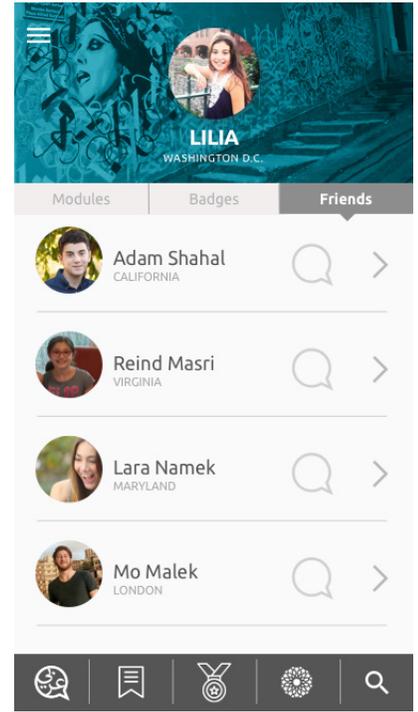
Appendix G | App Prototype



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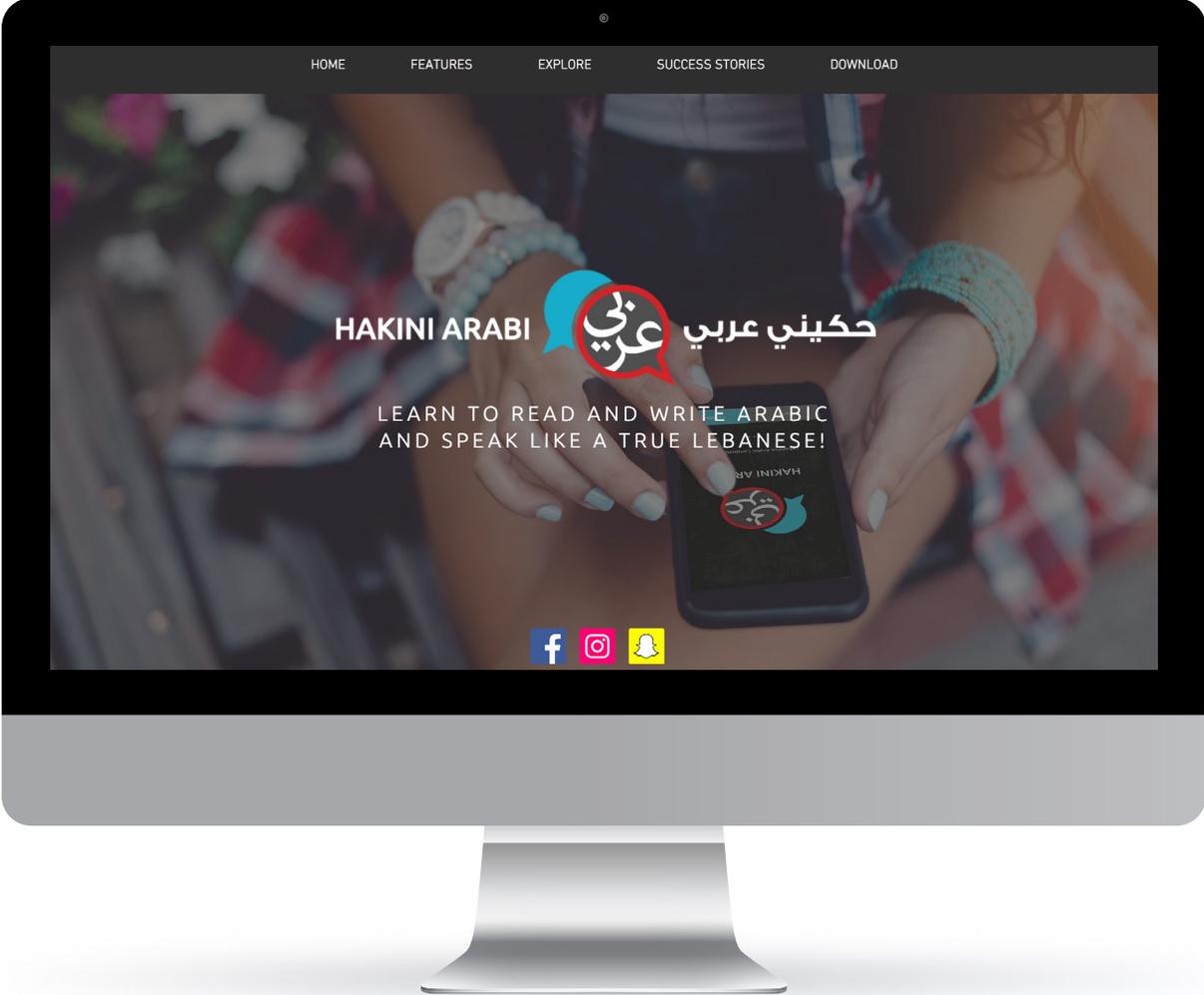
Appendix G | App Prototype



Appendix G | App Prototype



Appendix H | Website

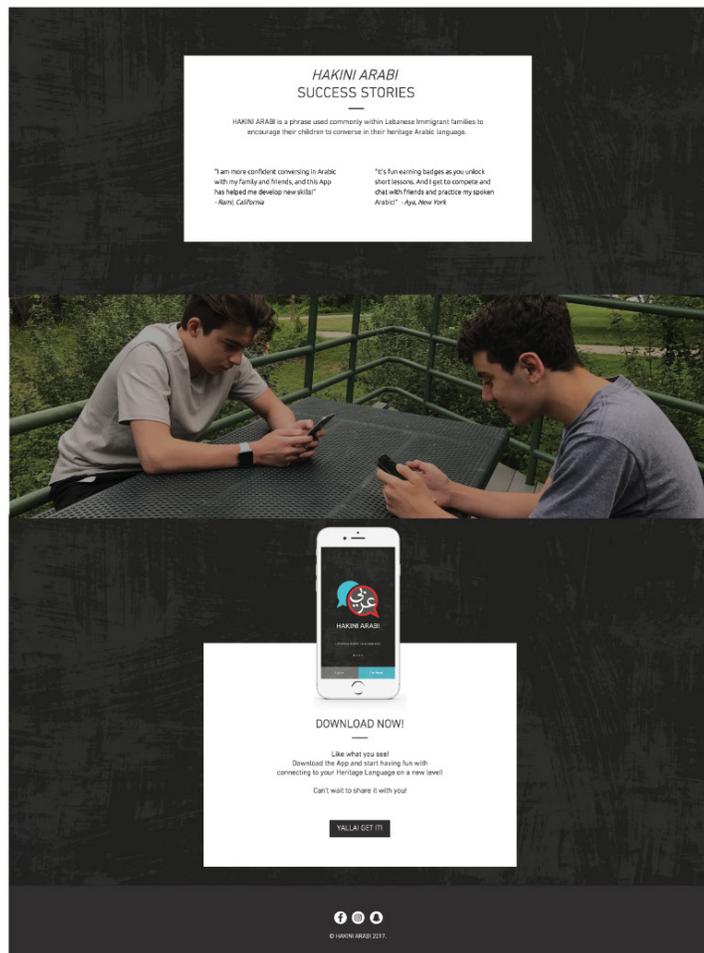


Appendix H | Website

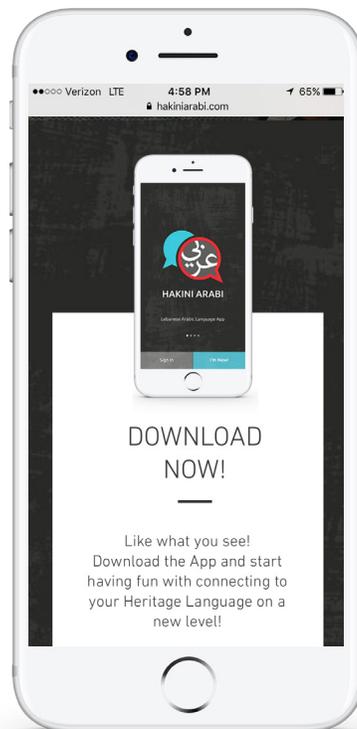
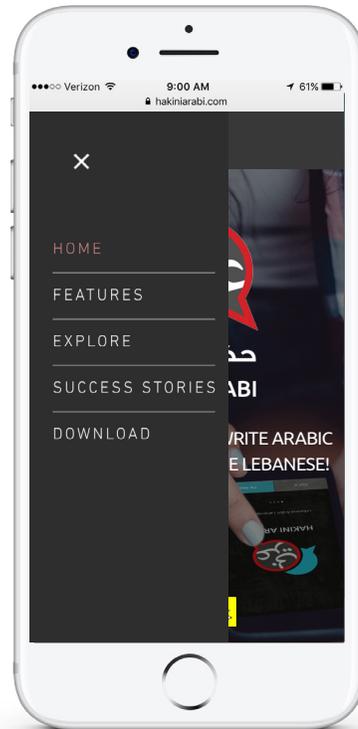


EXPLORE THE APP

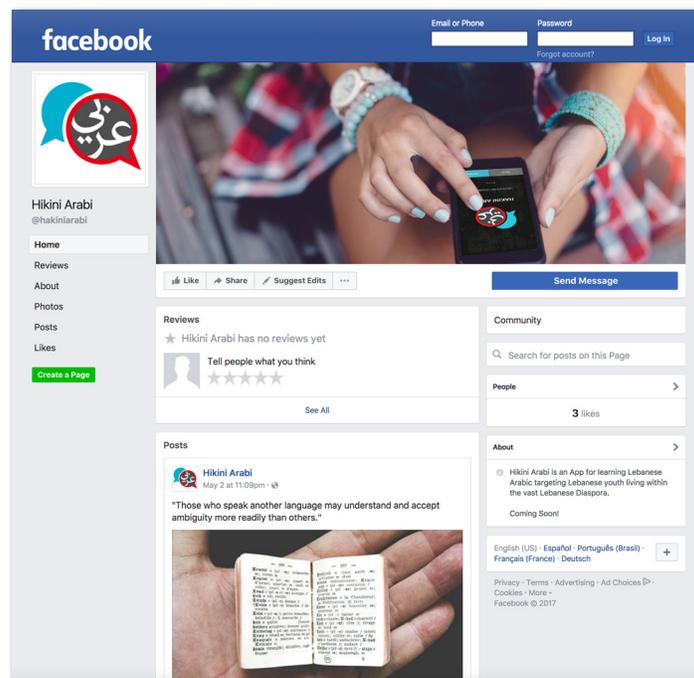
Yalla! Let's start working on your Arabic Skills. Practice the Arabic Language while learning to converse in the Lebanese Dialect. Invite friends and learn together.



Appendix H | Mobile



Appendix H | Social Media



Appendix H | Social Media

