
To Speak or Not to Speak? The Dilemma of Heritage Language and Identity for the Culturally Hybrid Generation

Zozan Balci

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Christina Ho

Distinguished Professor Alastair Pennycook

University of Technology Sydney

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Zozan Balci, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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*To my sister
who walked this journey with me*

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Abstract

This study argues that the acquisition and use of heritage languages among Second Generation migrants is often disrupted due to narrow identity frameworks which prioritise singular affiliation with either host or heritage society. Based on qualitative data gathered from young adults who were exposed to at least two heritage languages throughout their childhood and adolescence, this study aims to demonstrate how the structurally embedded tensions between maintaining diversity on the one hand and maintaining homogeneity on the other interfere with the potential of cultural hybridity.

The data captures the diverse difficulties, uncertainties, feelings of non-belonging and lack of autonomy experienced by such individuals. It problematises notions of 'passing' and 'positioning', highlighting that the need to adopt such practices to fit into an artificially constructed framework of identity is both worrisome and demoralising. Through the conceptualisation of heritage as capital, a discussion of visibility and an analysis of identity-related affective responses, it provides an insight into the lived experience of hybridity and the way parents, teachers, heritage community and the host society respond to them.

It exposes powerful stories of race, including notions of 'whiteness', 'white-washing' and the 'one-drop rule' and also provides an insight into how visible differences between parents and their children impact relationships, identification and language patterns. This study confirms that prevailing ideas of singular affiliation and 'national identity' ultimately impact hybridity and multilingual repertoires at a great personal expense.

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