

Language Identity Crisis Among Teenagers in Multilingual Households

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أزمة الهوية اللغوية لدى المراهقين في الأسر متعددة اللغات

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Abstract: □

,This essay is a contemplation on the kind of experience that children raised in multilingual households have i.e., their language identity. Based on qualitative evidence and theoretical literature, the research recognizes internal conflict, cultural dissonance, and bewildered linguistic behavior and identity crisis among young people. Transnational and multilingual young people undergo rival linguistic, national, and cultural belongingness from their early life. As they mature, they innovatively negotiate their multi-identities through social interaction and multiple adaptation strategies. Their heightened sensitivity to cultural distinction enables them to move smoothly through fluid and uncompromisingly fashioned claims to identity. Ambiguity is thus granted here as an essential aspect in enabling the accrual of a densely coherent sense of self and belonging enabling adolescents' dense linguistic. Results highlight the prominence of awareness and care systems identities Keywords: Multilingual, Identity, Crisis

الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث الصعوبات التي يواجهها المراهقون الذين نشأوا في أسر متعددة اللغات، ولا سيما فيما يتعلق بهويتهم اللغوية. وبالاعتماد على البيانات النوعية والمصادر الأكاديمية، يسلط البحث الضوء على الصراعات الداخلية، والتنافر الثقافي، والممارسات اللغوية الهجينة التي تسهم في نشوء أزمة هوية لدى الشباب. فمنذ ولادتهم، يتعرض الأطفال في الأسر العابرة للحدود والمتعددة اللغات لانتماءات لغوية وثقافية ووطنية متنوعة. ومع تقدمهم في العمر، يبدؤون بالتفاوض بنشاط حول هوياتهم المتعددة من خلال تفاعلهم مع الآخرين، مستخدمين استراتيجيات تكيف مختلفة. وتُمكنهم حساسيتهم العالية تجاه الفروق الثقافية من إدارة التوترات بين الهويات المرنة والثابتة. وفي هذا السياق، تصبح الازدواجية والغموض عنصراً أساسياً في تشكيل إحساس متماسك بالذات والانتماء. وتبرز النتائج أهمية الوعي والأنظمة الداعمة التي تساعد المراهقين على التكيف مع تعقيدات هوياتهم اللغوية. الكلمات المفتاحية: تعدد لغوي، الهوية، أزمة

1. Introduction:

Linguistic diversity is the striking feature in building inclusive spaces with open and valued more than a single identity. Multilingualism, adaptation of linguistic heritage, and the development of intercultural competence are pedagogic systems that ensure positive orientations towards multilingual backgrounds and thereby belonging

and pride in language groups. Language acquisition in a child is a significant stage in the course of identity formation since it provides room for expression, socialization, and communication as an individual grows. Language enables an individual to say what he or she thinks, feels, and believes when he or she is communicating with the world (Grosjean, 2010). Language enables an individual to know himself or herself and provides a space where one gets his or her role in society. In multilingual and bilingual environments, however, language development is complex. Kids who possess more than one language to develop have to navigate several linguistic as well as cultural spaces when they are placed in their native surroundings and result in hybridized and layered identities. Multilingualism provides the potential for code-switching across different social sets, management of different cultural encounters, and expression of meaning in multi-dimensional modes (Pavlenko, 2004). These people are likely to construct hybrid identities that borrow from languages and cultures they are exposed to. They can change between languages depending on social contexts or assign specific roles to specific languages. This flexibility enhances the variability and accuracy of self-expression. Granting individuals the autonomy to decide upon language also grants individuals the autonomy to construct identity. Language revitalization policies, linguistic rights, and self-determination protect cultural heritage and encourage collective identity in an age of globalization. <https://fikrmag.com>

In contemporary, globalized societies, multilingualism is no longer the exception due to migration, intercultural marriage, and multicultural society. While being capable of learning multiple languages is in most cases considered an asset, it might also trigger inner turmoil in adolescence—a stage of life where one forms identities. This may then trigger so-called "language identity crisis," an inner turmoil triggered by various linguistic and cultural bonds.

1.1 The Identity Crisis in Multilingual Environments

Teenagers from multilingual households often alternate between languages and cultures. A good example is a teenager who speaks English at school, Arabic at home, and is exposed to Kurdish in the neighborhood. The teenager will be struggling to know which language is most linked to his or her real self. This is not just about language skills—it is really one of identification.

As Andreas and Tony Cline (2014) note, most bilinguals are rather different from the minority of translators or interpreters. Most don't acquire their languages simultaneously in childhood, and they also don't use them evenly in communities or homes. One language normally influences the other, and accents or prejudiced skills are the outcome. If bilingualism is to be interpreted as native-like proficiency in two or more languages, most of the people who use two or more languages on an everyday basis would not be considered bilinguals. Yet, such individuals could not be labeled monolinguals either, since their everyday life is intimately connected with more than one language. Grosjean (2010) emphasizes that bilingual individuals should not be viewed as "two monolinguals in one person" but rather as individuals who have their own specific linguistic identity. Despite this, teenagers are often compelled by social pressures to choose one dominant language or cultural identity, making them feel deficient or detached from parts of their heritage. Historically, education and culture have been the place for other language learning and use. In modern times, English is now the global lingua franca of cultural and educational communication. There are millions of students and children worldwide who are not only studying one or two foreign languages in school but also studying a language that is not their own mother tongue. This is most evident in the majority of African and Asian countries, as well as in immigrant communities.

2.1 Causes of Language Identity Crisis

1. Parental Language Practices

Homeland is not so much a matter of location—i.e., a specific house, city, or neighborhood—but of relationship, belonging, and personal connection. In this regard, the concept of homeland mirrors an implicit claim of identity, and language is used as a platform where people get together and communicate. In multilingual families, conflicts commonly occur when parents insist on one language when the rest of society insists on another, making the teenagers ambivalent (Andreas & Tony Cline, 2014). To balance this, a trilingual development path is followed by some parents: both parents speak their own home language in the home, and children hear two mother tongues, with the community language added later when they go to nursery, school, and social settings. Furthermore, many such families also build social networks with other bilingual or trilingual families, constructing a community within which multiple languages are valued and actively used.

2. Peer Influence

Teenagers commonly shift their language use to converge with peers, sometimes moving away from their home language to fit in with a group.

Language is instrumental in social group-making and social group maintenance, and peer groups commonly develop norms, status indicators, and collective linguistic practices that reinforce group identity (Bucholtz, 2001; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1995). Through labeling, teenagers create and reproduce social distinctions

because the naming of social types introduces categories into everyday conversation and fixes group boundaries. Code-switching is a common strategy in these circumstances: teenagers will blend words from their home language and the peer language to successfully carry out social interaction. While this strategy facilitates communication and strengthens peer relationships, it also creates confusion or discomfort when teenagers are forced to place greater significance on one language than the other; this may weaken their sense of connection to their heritage language. 3. Educational Contexts Schools are also significant places where language identity is constructed. If heritage languages are not supported in schools, students may feel ashamed or experience a sense of loss regarding their linguistic heritage. In those families where parents employ their heritage languages continuously, children tend to acquire the community language primarily in nurseries, schools, and through everyday social contact (Lei Wang, 2008). Family learning choices are often made on the basis of long-term family plans. For example, some families select schools with multilingual instruction to prepare children for the eventuality of living abroad. In Germany, many parents opt for bilingual schooling so that children acquire both German and English to a competent level, thus having greater freedom and options in future academic or career pursuits.

4. Media and Pop Culture

Colin Baker (1992, p. 96) argues that popular culture, gender, and age have a direct influence on attitudes toward bilingualism. Home and school environments are significant, but peers and popular culture are often even more dominating. Through various media such as television, music, and short films, adolescents are exposed to a number of languages, particularly world languages like English, which they utilize in a bid to keep abreast of world fashions. This exposure frequently leads teens to give higher status to media language over their heritage languages. Interestingly, many believe that this is due to their enhanced metalinguistic awareness: learning a new language fosters a general interest in languages in general, which can actually underlie the maintenance of their home language. While this movement enables greater cultural adaptability and creativity, it risks creating an imbalance in which one language is overprivileged at the potential cost of linguistic and cultural origins.

2.2 Multilingualism Effects in Adolescents

Raising a bilingual or multilingual family is educationally, socially, and culturally stimulating. The experience is not without challenges, however, as families have to deal with common issues such as language mixing, peer pressure, and external influence on the use of language.

1. Emotional and Psychological Stress The surrounding world has a tendency to affect the emotional and psychological impact of multilingualism. For instance, monolingual school pupils will be embarrassed to communicate in a language other than the language of the school, and they have adverse attitudes towards their native language (Kaveh & Lenz, 2021).

Earlier research, such as Appel and Muysken (1987), even argued that bilingualism negatively affected personality and identity formation, leading to tension, emotional instability, or alienation (Diebold, 1968, in Appel & Muysken, 1987).

Actually, the majority of studies prior to the 1960s cited detrimental effects of bilingualism on intellectual, educational, and emotional development, with only a few citing neutral or positive effects.

2. Inconsistent or Hybrid Language Use (Code-Switching and Blending)

Code-switching is another common phenomenon, which Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995, p. 73) define as "the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode." This occurs when bilingual speakers alternate between languages within one conversation, or even one sentence. Although moderate code-switching can generate more cognitive flexibility, its overuse or uncontrolled practice can result in confusion and loss of proficiency in both languages. The process of code-switching is viewed as a fault by most multilingual speakers, as Palmer (2009, p. 42) tells us, and bilingual teenagers often try to avoid it purposely in classrooms. Palmer also informs us that code-switching becomes a problem only when one of the interlocutors does not know about all the languages involved. Thus, while code-switching can be a viable communicative approach at some points, it will be decried as an indication of bilingualism at other points, namely when it compromises on clarity or coherence of language use. As adolescents possess more than one language, they will sometimes mix vocabulary or grammar, and that will evoke embarrassment or fear in the event of being sanctioned. Multilingual adolescents feel inferior to monolingual speakers who prove competent in one language, thereby generating discomfort and feelings of inferiority. Inconsistency in two or more languages may also generate doubt about what is the best description of themselves, leading to internal conflict with negative impacts on self-esteem.

In addition to that, teenagers also experience social and cultural pressure when they are criticized for using their language or accent, which directly affects their own identity especially when they consider their own language as low status without adequately mastering the second or third language in order for them to feel properly accepted into society. The phenomenon can be a reason for alienation and insecurity.

Another group of studies, however, testifies that multilingualism is a source of social intelligence and mental flexibility. As soon as teenagers surmount psychological hesitation and declare their language diversity, they are resilient, secure, and elastic.

3. Conclusion

The article tried to put in the focus of interest the language identity crisis of teenage children from multilingual families—a complex and new phenomenon. While multilingualism is a double blessing, it must be coupled with open parent-child communication, tolerant school policy, and social tolerance. By opening up spaces where hybrid selves and linguistic diversity are made appealing, problems of multilingualism can be transformed into sources of strength and cultural enrichment. It is revealed by the findings that the intertwining of language identity, socialization, and inherited cultural heritage is likely to be tension-ridden. Teenagers employ several methods to reconcile cross-cutting wants: the need to belong and the resultant joy of not being driven into narrow categorizations.

They would rather position themselves as cultural and language fusions with the capacity to invoke selectively from a repertoire of various aspects of themselves in context.

It makes them comfortable in more than one place when that becomes desirable.

They also outlined other tactics, such as identity switching between choices, "world traveling," and laboring at "understanding"—a way of being able to reach out, acknowledge culturally conditioned standpoint, and convey experience and yet remain visible as separate individuals with hybridized identities.

These paradoxes strike at the very core of the participants' own life narratives, which are characterized by an ongoing search for belonging in the past, present, and future. They are in their parents' cultures but also different from them, thus constituting a sense of belonging that is inclusive and exclusive at the same time. Through this negotiation, they establish a narrative that is consistent but fluidly extending their hybrid selves into full-fledged extended cultural consciousness and appreciation of diversity.

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