

SUMMARY

Creating Places of Belongings through the Maintenance of Community Languages: Experiences of Japanese Second-Generation Youths and Their Parents in Australia

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This paper aims to discuss heritage language education in immigrant communities from an alternative viewpoint, analysing interviews with former students and their parents at the JCS Japanese School City Branch (JCS-JSCB), voluntarily operated by the Japanese community in Sydney, Australia. The model story of 'the importance of Japanese as a heritage language' is widely shared across the generations among Japanese communities around the world, as well as in Australia. However, our research found that while the first generation immigrants still insist their children learn Japanese language in order to foster a connection with their Japanese heritage, the children regarded it differently. At the same time, the meanings of teaching Japanese for the parents has changed. While they understood their parents' expectations, they occasionally felt conflicted about whether to continue learning Japanese as a second language, or they questioned the value of learning it at the expense of other opportunities. Despite this, learning at the Japanese community school afforded the children an alternative place of belonging in Australian society by sharing a common socio-cultural background with their classmates. By interpreting being Japanese in multiple ways according to their personal backgrounds and future vision, they flexibly applied this learning opportunity to their prospective life course beyond merely inheriting their ethno-cultural legacy. Indeed, this paper proposes that this educational opportunity in the migrant community is not only about passing on ethnic identity to the next generation, but also about creating a plurality of belongings and realities in the future for the migrant community.