Language use and (re)constructions of identity: Greek-Brazilian returnee migrants

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Introduction

Most of the studies conducted in language use and identity in a migrant context refer to immigrants who still reside in the host country. One study, in the author’s knowledge (Hoi Ying Chen 2008), examines how overseas Chinese (re)position themselves as locals or returnees upon their return to Hong Kong by choosing between two different patterns of code-switching (CS). This study focuses, however, on the Greeks who migrated to Brazil after the Second World War and, having spent some years there, have now returned to their home land (Greece). It considers whether the returnees perceive themselves as Greeks, as they did when they resided in the host country (Brazil), or if they feel the need to (re)position themselves as GBs upon their return to Greece. The study also aims to examine whether the returnees’ (re)positioning in their home land is expressed by language use and language attitudes towards both the Greek and the Brazilian-Portuguese language. The above correlate with sociolinguistic variables such as: age (first, second and third generations), sex and education.

To examine the above, both quantitative and qualitative data were considered. First, a questionnaire (which is discussed in the Methodology section below) was developed, based on a previous questionnaire in the study of Language Attitudes and Use in the Community of Greek Cypriots in London (Gardner-Chloros et al. 2005). The questionnaire elicited reported use of language, attitudes and feelings of ethnic belongingness. Second, qualitative data (in the form of interviews) provided discursive construction of identities through the participants’ narratives of personal experience (Holmes 2008, 316).

Throughout this paper the term ‘Greek-Brazilian community in Greece’ has not been used, since one has not been formed. This is because it does not serve the purpose communities usually do in host countries; language maintenance, practice of customs and the preservation of ethnic identity. The returnees, upon their return to their homeland, would be expected to merge in the country’s mainstream culture of which they form part, or at least they did before they migrated to Brazil.

Language and Identity in a Migrant Context

Ethnic identity has been defined as a common language spoken amongst a group of people that practise the same customs and share racial characteristics (Rex 1991, 11). Culture then could be the
cohesive force which connects members of the same group, as it provides them with guidelines (a set of norms and values) on how to participate in various activities and claim membership within the group (Hamers and Blanc 1989, 115).

For many cultures language is one of its main elements, as it is used for passing on culture, especially in cases where language is only spoken and not written by its people. Thus, it comes to mark people’s cultural membership(s) (Kramsch 1998, 69). Given the above, it is not difficult to see why some nations, such as the Catalonians, would come to consider themselves as ‘half a nation’ if they lacked their own language (Giles and Coupland 1991, 99). Language maintenance may also be vital to immigrants in a host country. For instance, Puerto Ricans’ ethnic identity in the United States is clearly aligned with the use of their language, which is why children are encouraged, or in some cases even obliged, to speak Spanish, at least with family members (Giles and Coupland 1991, 99).

Against this backdrop, language could be the vehicle for the construction of a social and cultural identity for immigrants in a host country that feel the need to reposition themselves in a new social group (Sunderland 2006, 27). The question is whether they choose to maintain their native language and position themselves as immigrants in the host country, or if they allow language shift in order to assimilate to the host country and claim membership to this new cultural group.

Language maintenance or shift in contact language situations does not rest merely with the individual and may be affected by various factors. In the case of immigrants in a host country where the official language (hereon majority language) is used in domains such as school, media, work or public services, language shift might occur faster for those who wish to advance socially and economically (Holmes 2008, 60). It may take three, and sometimes four, generations for language shift to take place. It occurs gradually with the first generation being mostly monolingual in their native language (hereon minority language), the second generation bilingual in both the majority and minority language and the third mostly monolingual in the majority language which has become their native language (Holmes 2008, 53).

However, external factors out of the individual’s control, such as lack of community centres, churches or schools where immigrants can meet in the host country and practice the minority language, may also result in language shift. Additionally, negative attitudes towards a language might also result in fast language shift. In this case even the first generation will encourage their children to use the majority language more (Grosjean 1982, 123-124). On the other hand, positive
language attitudes promote the minority language’s continuation amongst members of the second and third generation. For example, Greek-Cypriots in London consider speaking their parents’ native language not only a link to their cultural heritage, but also an advantage for either academic or employment reasons (Papapavlou et al. 1999).

A further study of the Greek-Cypriot community in London raises another interesting point. Younger Greek-Cypriot generations do not consider knowledge of the Greek-Cypriot dialect essential for involvement in the community’s various cultural activities. On the contrary, knowledge of phrases or words that can be inserted at key moments in a conversation is the prerequisite for the construction of their identity as younger generation Greek-Cypriots in London (Gardner-Chloros et al. 2005, 75).

Code-switching (CS) is also examined in this study, as a linguistic practice through which identity is constructed. CS could be defined as the use of both majority and minority language within the majority language, including, for instance, using the majority language as the main language with insertions of words, phrases, or even sentences from the minority language or vice versa (Grosjean 1982, 145-146). Whether CS occurs as a result of the situation in which interlocutors find themselves (for instance, avoidance of a linguistic code due to negative attitudes towards it, or switching languages to include a monolingual ) (Grosejan 1982, 139), or because the choice of a certain language is attributable to cultural elements the speaker wants it to evoke (Mendoza-Denton and Osborne 2010, 118), speakers distance or identify themselves with a culture through its practice and in this way construct their identity (Kramsch 1998, 70).

Methodology
Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study. The quantitative data was obtained from a questionnaire designed to elicit information on reported use of language and attitudes towards both Greek and Brazilian Portuguese (hereon PTB). The qualitative data provided actual constructions of identity, through interviews in which participants were asked to discuss the reasons underlying their migration to Brazil and return to their home land (Greece) and their life experiences in both places.

First, eight interviews were conducted to observe the speech and determine whether participants would position themselves culturally by a linguistic choice, either by the use of Greek or PTB, or the practice of CS. The participants were five females from all three generations and three males that belonged to the first and the second generation. There was only one instance of CS, due to lack of
knowledge on techniques to relax the participants and facilitate natural speech (Holmes 2008, 248). Furthermore, it was difficult to organise a GB gathering, which might have resulted in the production of natural speech, because the interviews were conducted during the vacation when most were away on holidays.

Secondly, 40 questionnaires were distributed to all three generations of GB returnees during Christmas vacation. Each questionnaire comprised 59 questions, divided into four sections to elicit information on a) language attitudes, b) language proficiency, c) domains of language use and d) on participants’ language preference in their media consumption. Finally, sociolinguistic variables, such as age, sex, education, ethnicity and contact with the host country, were elicited.

The questionnaire was distributed in both English and Greek. Only nine of the questionnaires were completed in the author’s presence. The ‘snow-ball’ technique was employed for the remainder. Although the questionnaire was representative of each generation, gender was representative only in the first and second generation.

Results and Discussion

Information on Participants

40 participants answered the questionnaire: 25 were female and 15 were male. The 40 participants were put into three ‘age’ categories: first, second and third generations. The criteria used to assign each participant into one of these categories were: their place of birth and at what age they immigrated to Brazil. The latter is important as it could affect the way the individuals perceive themselves, culturally or ethnically. Table 1 shows the number of female and male participants in each generation.

Table 1: Generations and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>1st Generation (Total N=15)</th>
<th>2nd Generation (Total N=15)</th>
<th>3rd Generation (Total N=10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants allocated to the first generation were born in Greece and left for Brazil between the ages of 9-26, either with their families or on their own. Two females, however, who left Greece with their parents at the age of three and five, and one male, who left when he was ten months old, were
considered as second generation, together with the ones born in Brazil. The third generation is comprised of participants born and raised in Greece.

Tables 2 and 3 show the education participants from the first and second generations received in Brazil and Greece.

Table 2: First Generation and Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Generation (Total N = 15)</th>
<th>Schooling in Greece</th>
<th>Schooling in Brazil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-2 years Primary</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completed Primary</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-3 years Primary</td>
<td>1-2 years Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completed Secondary</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 years Primary</td>
<td>Completed Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completed Primary</td>
<td>Completed Higher Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three members of the first generation attended one or two years of primary school in Brazil and only two participants completed secondary school of whom one moved on to higher education. The rest of them had their first years of schooling in Greece and four of them completed secondary school in Greece. All members of the second generation, on the other hand, had some years of schooling in Brazil and then continued their education in Greece as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Second Generation and Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Generation (Total N = 15)</th>
<th>Schooling in Brazil</th>
<th>Schooling in Greece</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-4 years Primary</td>
<td>Two completed Secondary (Greek) One completed Secondary (Greek) and Higher Education (American University in Athens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two completed Primary (American School) One completed Primary (Brazilian)</td>
<td>Two completed Secondary (American School) and one completed Higher Education (American University in Athens) One completed Secondary (Greek) and Higher Education (American University in Athens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Completed first 3 years of Secondary</td>
<td>Continued and completed Secondary (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completed Secondary</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Completed College</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Completed first year University</td>
<td>One completed Greek University Two completed American University in Athens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three participants of the second generation actually completed primary school in Brazil (however, two of these attended classes in the American school in Brazil) and then continued their studies in Greece, either by completing secondary school or by moving on to higher education. Three completed the first years of secondary school in Brazil and then continued their studies in Greece. Only six of them completed secondary education in Brazil and three of them attended the first year of university in Brazil and then completed higher education in Greece. On the whole, five of them got a degree from the American University in Athens and one from the Greek University. As for the third generation, all participants had their schooling in Greece and two moved on to higher education.

**Questionnaire Results**

**Language Proficiency**

The questionnaire results in language proficiency, including comprehension, oral and writing skills, show that the second generation scored higher than the first in all three skills relating to both languages. This can be explained by the fact that all members of the second generation have received at least one year of schooling in Brazil and many of them have reached secondary and higher education, either in the host country or when they returned to Greece, which explains their fluency in both languages.

The results in fluency in PTB could also be justified by the extent of contact participants maintain with the host country, either by visiting or calling relatives and friends that still live in the host country and the language they speak when they visit them. Amongst participants of the first generation 20% visit Brazil once a year, 13% go there once every five years and 20% visit the country every five years, however, only 30% use both languages with relatives and friends (7% reported the Greek language as the medium of communication with relatives and 13% use Greek with their friends). In contrast, 13% of the second generation go to Brazil once a year and 40% more than once every five years and while in the country 33% uses only PTB with both relatives and friends whereas 20% uses both languages.

Finally, 80% of the third generation reported poor performance in PTB and only 20% claim average knowledge of the language in all three skills (comprehension, oral and writing), whereas 90% report excellent use of the Greek language. It should be noted that none of the respondents ever attended classes in PTB or visited Brazil. Moreover, their contact with relatives in Brazil is kept to the minimum of once or twice a year.
Ethnic identity and mother-tongue

Table 4 shows how each generation perceives themselves ethnically, and which language they consider their native.

Table 4: Ethno-linguistic Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Mother-tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results presented in Table 4 above, the percentage of those who consider themselves GBs is higher in the second generation than in the first. This could be attributed to the fact that all participants of the second generation had at least one year of schooling in Brazil and some of them completed secondary school and reached higher education while there. They were, thus, introduced to a great extent to the country’s customs and traditions since their command of the host country’s official language was a prerequisite for them to participate in the school’s activities (Wei 2000, 4). This, also, explains why 47% of the participants in the second generation refer to both Greek and PTB as their mother-tongue. What emerges, therefore, is a correlation between perceived native language and ethnic identification. That is due to the important role language plays in both the transmission of a culture and in people’s sense of ethnic and cultural identity (Kramsch 1998, 69). In contrast, although members of the first generation have partly accepted their Brazilian identity (33% identify themselves as GBs), they all regard Greek as their native language. The above could be ascribed to ‘the myth of return’ (Rex 1991, 25) – the first generation’s wish to return to their home land one day. This desire of the first generation to return can motivate a desire to maintain their native language, which comes to be a symbol of their ethnic identity while they reside in the host country (Kramsch 1998, 75). The third generation unanimously ascribe to their Greek ethnic identity and their native language probably because they were all born in Greece and they never visited their parents’ place of birth – Brazil.
Domains of Language Use

Amongst the participants of the first generation Greek is the language mostly used with family members. For instance, 73% of the first generation ‘always’ use Greek with their partner and 40% ‘often’ speak PTB. The same applies with their children (53% ‘always’ use Greek and 47% ‘often’ use Greek with their children). Finally, the same pattern occurs when members of the first generation converse with their siblings (60% ‘always’ use Greek and 44% ‘often’); PTB, however, will be used more with their siblings than with their children. Since the first generation are thought of as the gate keepers of their native language in the host country, the Greeks, in particular, for whom their language is a symbol of their culture (Kramsch 1998, 75), one would assume that on their return to the home land where their native language is the official language, there would be no need for them to continue using PTB. Although Greek is the main language, one would have expected members of the first generation to use PTB in fewer domains. In this case, the persistent use of PTB – even in small percentages – arguably demonstrates their repositioning in Greece. The above is further supported by the use of PTB when they go out with both GB and Greek friends/relatives. PTB is used in their conversations with quite high percentages: it is used ‘often’ by 47% of the first generation and ‘sometimes’ by 47%. This is especially interesting if one takes into account the fact that some of the people taking part in the conversation have no knowledge of the language. Therefore, first generation GBs seem to feel the need to (re)position themselves.

PTB is used slightly more by members of the second generation when conversing with their parents (7% ‘always’ use it, 20% ‘often’ use it and 30% ‘sometimes’ use it) than when conversing with their spouses/partners (27% ‘often’ use PTB). Results also indicate that when members of the second generation interact with their siblings, they use, almost equally, both Greek (13% ‘always’ use Greek with their siblings and 17% ‘often’ use it) and PTB (7% of the second generation respondents ‘always’ use PTB and 20% ‘often’ use it). This is natural if one takes into account that both grew up divided between their parents’ native language (mainly spoken at home) and the dominant language of the host country in which they were born and grew up to a certain age. There is a common knowledge background of two languages and two cultures amongst the siblings, then, which is demonstrated by the use of two languages. Language use in this case functions as the bond amongst them.

Although members of the second generation are bilingual, arguably bicultural in its majority (see Table 4), they do not seem to have the same need to reposition themselves by incorporating PTB linguistic items into interactions with Greek speakers as their parents (first generation) do. That is...
evident in the use of language when members of the second generation go out with PTB friends/relatives; it could be argued that Greek is used more (33% of the second generation respondents ‘always’ use it, 27% ‘often’ use it and 13% ‘sometimes’ use it) than PTB (20% ‘always’ use it, 27% ‘often’ use it and 27% ‘sometimes’ use it). Yet when they are out with both Greeks and GB friends/relatives, Greek is the main language used (60% of the second generation respondents ‘always’ use it and 27% ‘often’ use it) and PTB insertions are less frequent (7% of the second generation ‘always’ use it, 13% ‘often’ use it, 20% ‘sometimes’ use it and 27% ‘rarely’ do).

As for the third generation, the language most used in all domains is Greek. This correlates with their fluency in the PTB language which is poor and their reported mother-tongue, which was unanimously reported to be Greek. This is due to the fact that they were all born in Greece and they never visited Brazil, neither did they have classes in PTB. Furthermore, only 7% of the second generation always uses PTB with their children and 7% use it ‘often’, however the main language used with children is Greek. Despite their poor performance in all three skills in PTB, members of the third generation do use the language to greet GB fellows (10% ‘always’ use PTB, 30% ‘often’ use it and 20% ‘sometimes’ do) and they sometimes (30%) use PTB either when they are out only with GB friends/relatives or with both GB and Greek friends/relatives. This is an important observation, because it shows they use PTB in Greece as a minority language (in the way Greek would have been used in the host country) to define themselves as children of the returnees. They maintain an aspect of ‘being Brazilian’ and they (re)position themselves as ‘different’ from mainstream Greek society through use of PTB.

Language Attitudes
Both first and second generation hold Greek in high esteem and that is evident in the percentage of those who agreed with statements regarding the importance of the Greek language; 67% of the participants of the first generation ‘strongly agree’ with the statement ‘Greek is an important part of our culture’ and 80% ‘agree’ that it is culturally advantageous to speak Greek in Brazil. A larger percentage of the second generation than the first regard the Greek language as an important element of the Greek culture (73% ‘strongly agreed’) and they also ‘agreed’ (73%) with the statement ‘it is culturally advantageous to speak Greek in Brazil’. It is interesting to note that although the percentage of those who agreed with the statement ‘Brazilians marrying with Greeks should learn Greek’ (67% of the second generation respondents ‘agreed’ and 7% ‘strongly agreed’) is the same in both the first and second generation, the percentage of the second generation respondents who strongly ‘agreed’ that ‘Greeks should learn to speak PTB if married with GBs’ was
higher (almost the double: 13%) when compared to the first generation. The above results indicate the need for re-affirming the importance of being GB in the context of Greek mainstream society and creating a space for both cultures and languages to exist. In the case of the first generation, the above is evident since by accepting the need they feel for the Greek that marry their GB children to learn PTB, they acknowledge that part of their identity is now Brazilian. In the case of the second generation, it could be argued that the results indicate their need for their Greek spouses/partners to recognise their dual identity.

As for attitudes towards code-switching, the first generation are undecided on whether they approve of people who code-switch (47% agree and 47% disagree with the statement: ‘I don’t approve of GBs who code-switch’). The percentage of the second generation who do not consider code-switching advantageous in a conversation is 60% and most of them did not disapprove of GBs who code-switch. The above indicates that code-switching might have a ‘covert prestige’ for them as it marks solidarity amongst people with common background (Thomas and Beckford Wassink 2010, 163-164).

Amongst third generation participants 60% agree that code-switching occurs in Brazil amongst the GBs, which is an indicator of the fact that their parents (one of the two is GB) practice a minimum of code-switching at home or under other circumstances. Their attitude, towards people who code-switch, is positive, as 70% approve of it. Some are, however, undecided (70%) that its practice in a conversation is an advantage.

Given the preceding results in attitudes towards code-switching amongst the third generation respondents and their minimal use of PTB, it could be argued that not only do they acknowledge the need of the older generations for using PTB repositioning themselves within mainstream Greek society but they also accept that as children of the second generation, they themselves belong to a group of people who are characterised by a duality in their ethnicity; they choose to demonstrate that by their language attitudes.

**Gender and Ethno-linguistic Identity**

Table 5 shows how male and female participants view themselves in terms of their ethnicity and which language they consider their native.
Table 5 Gender and Ethno-linguistic Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Mother-tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these figures, most female and male participants stated that their ethnic identity (60% for both genders) and their mother-tongue (72% female and 87% male) is Greek. The percentage, however, of female participants that reported GB as their native language is higher (20%) than that of the male participants (7%).

Gender and Language Use

Female participants speak Greek (40% ‘always’ speak Greek and 20% ‘often’ speak it) as often as PTB (40% of the female participants ‘always’ use PTB and 20% ‘often’ use it) with their children. On the other hand, male participants use mainly Greek with their children (53% of the male respondents ‘always’ use Greek and 20% ‘often’ do) and much less PTB (7% of the male respondents ‘always’ use PTB with their children and 27% ‘often’ do). Both genders speak Greek with their spouse/partner, parents and siblings more than PTB.

The higher percentages in the use of PTB when female participants converse with both Greek and GB friends/relatives or when they greet fellow GBs correlate with the difference in the percentage of females (20%) and males (7%) who stated PTB as their mother-tongue. It could be argued that female participants accept the duality in their ethnicity and native language more than males in accordance with their reported use of language in settings where the Greek language could have been the only choice.

Gender and Language Attitudes

On the whole, women were shown to have positive attitudes towards both languages that represent the two cultures they are in contact with – the Greek and the Brazilian – something which is in accordance with their reported use of language. This arguably reveals a dual identity. The above observation is reinforced by the high percentages of disagreement on behalf of the female respondents in relation to the statement ‘I don’t approve of GBs who code-switch’ (16% of the female participants ‘strongly disagreed’ and 56% ‘disagreed’) when compared to the percentage of
men (47%) who disagreed. Therefore, it could be argued that women are more open to their ethnic duality.

**Interviews**

In the interviews participants manifest their identity discursively by either code-switching or by the way they describe each culture (even when code-switching does not occur). Table 6 contains information on the number and gender of participants that were interviewed. In order to protect the participants’ anonymity, the names used in this section are not the real ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Interviewees</th>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>1st Generation (Total N=2)</th>
<th>2nd Generation (Total N=5)</th>
<th>3rd Generation (Total N=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the extract that follows Jill uses PTB as the main language and insertions of Greek words are in italics.

**Extract 1**

Jill: ...one would date the other in the *youth*, we had these flirtations as well.

But ... there was a guy that was interested in me, a Greek that came, two brothers that came from Greece and joined the *youth* and ....

.... free without restrictions from our parents... it wasn’t....In the church services we went when we could, when we were children, yes? *When we were young....our mum would take us to the church..everything. But we didn’t have to go every Sunday to the church .....*

In Extract 1, above, Greek was used to refer to parts of her life in Brazil that were associated with their Greek culture; the youth community that functioned as a bond of Greek immigrants’ children and their religion – the Greek Orthodox Church – in this example. This way she practised her Greek identity while she lived in Brazil. Although the interview took place in Greece where she has been living for the last ten years she switched to PTB to talk about her love life in her youth and the nice time she had growing up in Brazil. By code-switching Jill claims membership in the two cultural groups she pertains. However, performing ‘cultural acts of identity’ (Kramsch, 1998: 70) can be achieved even when code-switching does not occur.
Extract 2 comes from a second generation female, Tina, who came back to Greece at the age of twenty-one and they do not contain instances of code-switching. Still the use of one language – Greek – in these extract suggests the construction of a new space on both Greek and Brazilian cultures: the reification of a third space (Finnis, 2010).

Extract 2
Tina: It is a fact....that after the first two-three months that the enthusiasm passed... I had a hard time adapting to the lifestyle of the Greeks and their mentality...they seemed vulgar...I don’t know how to describe it... the Brazilian people are a gentle people, happy... they are extroverts...they are different... the Greeks are louder, more demanding...ehm...they are not as polite...as the Brazilians...

Tina distances herself from both cultural groups by using expressions such as ‘the Greeks’, ‘the Brazilian people’ and ‘their’ or ‘they’ when talking about Greeks and Brazilians. The feeling of not belonging to either the Brazilian culture or the Greek, leads her to invent a space between the two cultures and reposition herself in Greece as GB (Finnis 2010).

Conclusion
What the results in ethnicity and native language clearly show is that a few members of the first (33%) and many more of the second (67%) generation have chosen neither the Greek nor the Brazilian ethnic identity for themselves, but have chosen the GB which comprises cultural elements from both the host country and their homeland. They declare their need to invent a new space that gives them a sense of ‘ethnic belongingness’ (Christou 2004, 54) instead of being divided between the two existing cultures they are familiar with. A ‘third space’ is invented where they can reify their identity as GBs by the use of both languages and mark membership to a nascent cultural group (Finnis 2010, 4). In this way they reposition themselves on their return in the homeland as GB returnees instead of Greeks who are back to the place they belong to ethnically and linguistically.

The repositioning amongst members of the second generation was expected as they have grown up with two languages and cultures. However, the need for repositioning amongst members of the first generation constitutes a paradox if one takes into account the results in reported ethnicity (67% reported Greek and 33% GB) and their native language (100% Greek) together with the fact that they are back in their homeland. Reported language attitudes and use, though, verify that first
generation GBs use more both languages than the second generation does when they are in the presence of both their GB and Greek friends. It could be argued that although the second generation uses both languages equally when they are out with GBs, which serves the purpose of solidarity (Finnis 2010, 5) and marks group membership, they, also, feel the need to embrace their homeland’s culture and they do so by a more limited use of the PTB language when they are in the presence of Greeks as well.

The third generation clearly defined themselves in terms of their ethnicity and mother-tongue as Greeks. Their language attitudes and use, though, indicate their acknowledgement of their parents’ duality in ethnicity and language and their membership to this nascent cultural group of GBs being the second generation’s children. As for differences in gender, the female participants were more accepting to the duality of their identity than men were.

The findings of this study were interesting in that they showed how people’s identity is not static and adapts to the circumstances they find themselves in. People then are agents of their identity as they choose in every instance how to use language to either join a cultural group or have others acknowledge their cultural duality (Gardner-Chloros et al. 2005, 78).

Bibliography


