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# Refiguring Refugee Resistance and Vulnerabilities: Hazara Community Publishing in the Australian Resettlement Context

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## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on intercultural negotiations and constructions of contemporary ethnic and cultural identity in a Western country of resettlement, through collaborative community publishing with Hazara people, a persecuted cultural and linguistic group. As a research team, primarily using interviews, we examined the multicultural children's bookmaking project and the intercultural negotiations undertaken between 2018 and 2022 which led to the publication of an Afghanistani children's story in three languages (English, Hazaragi and Dari) with artwork created by children. A crafted research narrative is used to present participants' voices genuinely and respectfully as they generously engaged with our research process. We build upon Judith Butler's analytical framework of linguistic vulnerability as the generative foundation of resistance to examine how linguistic precarity for Hazaragi speakers resettling in Australia is experienced. We found that community bookmaking and publishing involved complex processes of translation and transliteration where practical and political problems about cultural and linguistic authority were confronted. Engaging in this process of intercultural negotiation affords new possibilities for the resignification of recognisable and intelligible Hazara identities. We argue that a more liveable life for refugees in linguistically precarious resettlement contexts can be supported through culturally and linguistically responsive infrastructure that is respectful of their meaning making resources.

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## Introduction

*Probably everyone in this project also thought this is a very small and simple project ... Now you can see, it is a long story (Hazara Project Leader).*

As researchers of migration, multilingual and multicultural community building practices, and storytelling, we have engaged with the children's community publisher Kids'

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Own Publishing (KO) on a variety of book projects in recent years (Tomsic et al. 2019; Choi and Weerasuriya 2021). In 2021, we became interested in a conflict that arose from the intercultural and linguistic negotiations of a multicultural children's bookmaking project in the regional Australian city of Bendigo with Hazara community members. It involved publishing the Afghanistani children's story, *The Legend of Buz-e-Chini*, in which a mother goat teaches her children how to be safe (Afghanistani Families of Bendigo 2022). This story is usually shared orally, from adults to children. In this case it was written and published in three languages (in the order they appear in the book): English, Hazaragi and Dari – accompanied by illustrations created by children and their parents – for adults in the community to share with their children. Publishing in Hazaragi is notable because it is an oral language, whose speakers are part of a linguistic precariat. After the book was first published in 2018, people who were not Hazara raised questions about the text in Hazaragi which was written by the Hazara Project Leader (HPL). Another version of the book was published in 2019, without involvement of the HPL. This created considerable turmoil for the HPL, who saw that her work and language were not being respected. It also created difficulties and challenges for the contracted project manager (CPM), the publisher (KO) and the local council (CGB). In 2020, new CGB staff oversaw a process for the two versions of the book to be checked by professional and community translators and speakers with varying degrees of connection to Hazaragi. It was agreed that the initial version of the book was the best to use with some additional minor changes to be made. Work on a revised edition with the HPL and other Hazaragi speakers began in 2021 and the book was republished in late 2022.

The intercultural negotiations that included intracultural conflict about the Hazaragi text were centred around notating an oral language within a linguistically plural and politically contested cultural context, and doing this in an English dominated resettlement country (including KO's publishing software not being well set up for Hazaragi and Dari), where competing claims to cultural and linguistic authority were contested. The statement at the beginning of this article is from HPL, and it is the long story of vulnerability, resistance and infrastructure that we examine here.

This inquiry about intercultural negotiations expounds upon the use of art amongst refugee children and youth to engage in identity politics (Harris et al. 2017; Marselis 2017; Whyte 2017) in rural and multicultural communities (Butler 2016; Radford 2016) within an Australian resettlement context (Neumann et al. 2014; Roose et al. 2015). It focuses on a reimagining of the linguistic and cultural vulnerabilities that refugees are presumed to have, and need to 'overcome' in order to express their cultural identities in places of resettlement. Building on the work of feminist scholars who refigure the relationship between vulnerability and resistance, we found it fruitful to see the ways in which the HPL's resistance and agency were directly connected to a position of linguistic vulnerability. This resistance enacted in terms of infrastructure is understood here as including individuals and organisations that are a part of social conditions and material contexts that can support what Judith Butler terms as a liveable life (2016: 19). We argue that a more liveable life for refugees in linguistically precarious situations in resettlement requires culturally and community responsive infrastructure.

This article will first outline the background for our research, the persecution and forced movement of Hazara people and the position of Hazaragi in contributing to their linguistic precarity alongside the Australian resettlement context. We then turn

to the scholarly framework that underpins our analysis and the research methodology employed. This is followed by our results presented as a narrative, told through the voices of some of the key people involved, primarily the HPL. It is an approved edited version of their words, and written in terms each person endorsed for an academic audience. At the heart of the bookmaking project is sharing stories. In presenting the bookmaking project as a story, we have incorporated scholarly commentary into a narrative presentation to draw out the analytical features of resistance, vulnerability and infrastructure that we see as central to this case study. This is followed with a final discussion section.

### ***Context of Hazaras in Australia and the Story of Buz-e-Chini***

The numbers of Afghanistani people seeking safety in Australia increased in the early 1990s before the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan by 1995. Since 1999, the majority of people from Afghanistan and Pakistan seeking asylum who arrived in Australia by boat are Hazara (Neve 2014: 2) and over 60 per cent of Hazaras who came to Australia after 2001 have come as asylum seekers (Radford n.d.: 4). Renewed attacks on Hazaras have occurred since USA forces left Afghanistan and the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021. While the Australian government has made Afghanistan a priority group in the 2021–2022 Humanitarian programme, many Hazara refugees are in Australia on temporary visas, and although recent changes mean some can apply to remain permanently others cannot and face the possibility of being required to leave Australia (Mohammadi and Askary 2021; Anwari 2023).

There is a long history of violence against Hazaras which was foundational to the formation of Afghanistan as a nation state. Through the Hazara-Afghan wars between 1890 and 1893, and other conflicts, ‘an ethnic status hierarchy’ was cemented with Shia Hazaras at the bottom of the scale who ‘bore the brunt of discrimination imposed by a Sunni majority’ (Barfield 2010: 125). This historical persecution has strong contemporary resonance as ‘harrowing stories passed between generations’ and ‘past atrocities act as a benchmark of terror in the present’ (Phillips 2011: 183) and is a key driver of the forced displacement of people from Afghanistan.

The first language for Hazara people is Hazaragi. Hazaragi is an oral language but it can be written using the Persian alphabet (Emadi 2002, p. 78). It is linguistically related to Dari, but the nature of the connection is contested. While some Hazaragi speakers take pride in this language, it is not always widely respected (Donehue 2021: 85). A push to having Hazaragi recognised as a language is said to be driven by Hazara refugees (Saikal 2012: 86).

There is a small but developing body of scholarship with Hazara refugees in countries of resettlement that focuses on refugee identities and belonging (Rodriguez-Jimenez and Gifford 2010; Neve 2014; Hetz 2021; Radford n.d. and 2016); memory (Phillips 2011) and representation (Rodan and Lange 2008). While arts-based and participatory research with refugees have been examined (Lenette 2019; Nunn 2022), there is an absence of scholarly works that focus on publishing refugee communities generally, and with Hazara communities specifically.

Community bookmaking and publishing with refugee communities in resettlement is a creative process in which new cultural artefacts are created and can be shared widely.

KO works collaboratively with children and families in an artist led process to share cultural knowledge, support community building and create opportunities for individuals within local communities to be represented and included (Kenny et al. 2017). KO has published 30 books with multiple languages, many of which were connected to refugee and migrant communities (Choi and Weerasuriya 2021).

The children's story of *Buz-e-Chini* is a rural tale of 'a mother goat determined to keep her three babies safe from [a] cunning village wolf' (Fiazi 2020). As a story 'many different iterations of it have, and continue to, exist. The tale [has been] shaped over and over again by the various tongues that told it' (Fiazi 2020). The story has been used politically, to respond to a culture under attack in the 2012 animated film by Hazara director Abbas Ali (Bidar 2012; Hazara of Melbourne 2020). Cultural agency was also enacted in the production of the KO book. As the HPL states, 'Having this children's book with English, Hazaragi and Dari carries great importance for the community, as it keeps culture alive and nourishes language learning ability' (Afghanistani Families of Bendigo 2022).

The idea of cultural maintenance in Ali's and HPL's motivations is not one of static preservation but dynamic sustainability. The story can be told and re-told through an assemblage of human and non-human resources available in their immediate spaces, considerations of historical, political and moral views related to ethnicities and languages, and pragmatic understandings of what communicative and expressive resources are needed in new places where refugees are rebuilding their lives. These dimensions will become more evident in HPL's account that follows. The inclusivity and visibility of languages are to 'nourish', nurture and encourage 'language learning abilities' as HPL points out, but they can also act as prompts for those 'not in-the-know', external to particular migrant communities, to learn about the complexities of language differences and the politics that shape those differences. It is clear from those who have heard this story orally in their childhood (as highlighted below) that the reality of being able to read this story in multiple languages holds a special significance to a community of Afghan readers (Fiazi 2020).

## Materials and Methods

### *Scholarly Framework*

Vulnerability is a malleable term, but in humanitarian and refugee policy contexts, it is often presented as a fixed category that creates the conditions for rights or protections to be enacted (Welfens and Bekyol 2021: 2). We are inspired by feminist scholars who have called for an epistemological rethinking of such categorisations, who consider vulnerability as 'one of the conditions of the very possibility of resistance' (Butler et al. 2016: 1). Vulnerability can be 'a space to work from as opposed to something only to be overcome' (Hirsch 2016: 81). We understand vulnerability as relational and social, and constituted in specific historical contexts which must be part of any critical analysis (Butler et al. 2016: 4). In seeing resistance emerging from, and being part of, vulnerability, we can look towards 'new forms of embodied political interventions and modes of alliance that are characterised by interdependency and public action' (Butler et al. 2016: 7). This framework enables us to interrogate the intercultural

negotiations and impact of the multilingual community bookmaking which is the basis of our research inquiry.

Susan Samata's concept of a 'linguistic precariat', developed in relation to Butler, is used to understand how we might think about Hazara people 'whose identity is ... challenged in language/culture affiliation grounds' (Samata 2019: 167). Linguistic vulnerability and being part of a linguistic precariat can form the basis of empowerment, a place from which to act and speak and resist dominant power structures. Resistance can take many forms, including pushing back against the so-called "'normativity" of monolingualism' as well as actively using languages which are suppressed (Samata 2019: 175-176). In resettlement countries like Australia, where English is the dominant language across institutions and public culture, refugees who do not speak English are positioned as lacking necessary communication skills despite the many languages they readily use. Publishing a book featuring Hazaragi, alongside Dari and English, is itself an act of resistance against both English domination and Hazara persecution. It is an example of the 'complex patterns of intersectionality encountered in the modern metropolis' which can pose challenges to identity and subjectivity (Samata 2019: 176).

These types of resistance, or agency, possible for people who are connected to what Butler called 'intersubjective and infrastructural conditions of a liveable life', highlights dependency and interdependency of humans on social and material conditions (Butler 2016: 19). While infrastructure is a broad term, in this context, we include organisations and people directly involved in this community bookmaking project, as well as people and organisations who were brought or entered in to the process. There is a complex web of relationships, beliefs and political understandings that we aim to disentangle in our analysis, not least being the challenges of publishing an oral language.

### **Exploring Through 'Crafted Research Narratives'**

As external collaborators to the Hazara community we became curious about what we could learn from the events and issues that transpired in this bookmaking project that involves publishing a mixture of dominant, vulnerable and hidden languages. With university ethics approval (Human Research Ethics Committee, ACU Project ID 2021-151H) and signed consent from four key members involved in this bookmaking project, the publisher KO, the artist (AT) engaged by KO, the Hazara project leader (HPL) and the contracted project manager (CPM) employed by the City of Greater Bendigo (CGB), we conducted an hour-long interview with each interviewee over Zoom in September 2021 and follow up consultations in 2022.

To build our own understandings of intercultural negotiations from the 'Buz-e-Chini' project, we experimented by crafting each of the interviewee's data in the form of an individual recount. We took this approach in response to the need for democratising knowledge production and exchange in a postmodern, transglobal era. Nelson (2011) makes a case for experimenting with creative forms or styles of narratives in language education research, with "'crafted" here referring to narratives that are deliberately styled in arts-based forms ... Implicit analysis or social commentary is often embedded within the crafted narrative' (Nelson 2011: 465). Through 'vivid unfolding of events', such narratives can prompt opportunities for 'imaginative interpretations and revisionings' (Nelson 2011: 463), what Bhabha expressed as 'a way to engage communities of learners,

teachers and researchers in claiming what Bhabha (2003) famously called the “right to narrate” (2003: 180) – and, in so doing, to foster grassroots knowledge work’ (2003: 471).

The informants’ interview responses were generally told in the form of a story with a chronological order already present. We stitched the relevant informant’s recounts together considering the suitability of the information within the structure of a typical narrative arc (exposition, rising action, climax and resolution). We deleted repetitive ideas, hesitations and information not relevant to our research focus but maintained speaking voices. In doing this, we realised the powerfulness of using the informants’ narratives. It allowed us to hear the speakers’ voice embodied with their beliefs, values and knowledges related to cross cultural, multilingual intercultural negotiations. Rather than pulling out extracts framed within the bulk of our own commentaries as researchers, we chose to position our analytical commentaries at the end of each element of the narrative arc. These separations better allow for readers to gain a sense of who the speakers are, while also centralising their own interpretations of the events and issues. We see ‘crafted research narratives’ as a dynamic approach that allows for multiple interpretations that invites collaborative analysis and meaning making.

Being heard, for some, can, as HPL’s comments will show, be about life, death, justice and possibilities for new lives in new places. In the context of performing ‘post-class’ ideologies, Thurlow (2016) states, we need “‘new’ methodological interventions [that] can help us do a better job of understanding the issues and injustices at the heart of our work’ (2016: 509). Our crafted research narrative is one attempt in bringing about a better understanding of these issues and injustices.

## Results

### *Crafting the Narrative: The Mobilisation of Linguistic Vulnerability*

#### *Exposition: creating the infrastructure*

**CPM:** In 2018 I became the project manager for the Multicultural Children’s Book Project. My role was to coordinate and liaise with the members involved in the project – the council, the community publisher, working with the community, getting them to the workshops and making sure they were involved in the workshops.

We reached out to the community to participate in this project for children. Straightaway we found that the adults also wanted to be involved. They wanted to capture the stories they were told as children by their parents and grandparents. Most of the participants were predominantly Hazara refugees. The big thing for the Hazara community was the issues surrounding Hazaragi as a language and the Hazaras being an ethnic minority – how their voice and language were never recognised. They weren’t taught to read and write using Hazaragi. The community champion I had from the Afghan community, HPL, helped me make sure that we were doing justice to the project from the community’s point of view and provided me with so much education on how to go about the project.

HPL is a highly educated woman from Afghanistan but educated in Pakistan. Her family migrated from Pakistan to Australia as refugees. She was educated in Persian and did linguistic studies in Hazaragi so she was very knowledgeable. She did the entire translation of the book, which we then got checked by other members of the



community and HPL's contacts from a university in Pakistan. That involvement of the community was very important to her. She was the connection to the community and wanted to ensure the book was a story from Hazaragi culture and tradition, something that was passed down from generation to generation. We had a clear direction right from the beginning. In the workshops, the parents all had an opinion and a story they wanted to share. We had a vote and the whole group voted on *Buz-e-Chini* being the story of choice. We decided to retell it based on the recollections of people in the group. The recollections were written down, and the story was all agreed upon by the participants.

Then it was translated into Hazaragi and Dari. We had both languages in the book, which was also significant in that Hazaragi and Dari have never been published side-by-side on equal standing before. It was one of those other things for the Hazara community to show that, 'we're Hazara, we're proud, we're the same as the rest of Afghanistan who have been persecuting us for so long'. So, it's a very powerful little children's book, for the greater community.

**AT:** I ran two workshops with the children at a library to create the artwork. With *Buz-e-Chini*, the story came from the community, so I already had an idea of some of the characters. The kids drew some caricatures of the characters. I took their drawings and turned them into puppets, and then created a bit of a puppet theatre just on a pin-board so that the younger kids could then engage with the story. We acted it out using hand puppets. That was a way of getting the younger kids involved, and getting them to hear, listen and live the story in a way they would be receptive to, so that we could then move forward with making this book together.

### **Commentary: bookmaking as grounds for resistance**

Considering the legacy of oppression and persecution that Hazara background refugees have endured, this bookmaking project created by the city council, did more than just 'capture the stories they were told by their parents in Afghanistan'. The participants bring with them vulnerabilities shaped by politics of language, hierarchies of ethnic identities, knowledge of literacy and expressions of voice. The making of a book with Hazaragi and Dari 'published side-by-side on equal standing' allows Hazara speakers an opportunity to contest the minority positions ascribed to them by recognisable authorities and reframe perceptions of Hazaragi. In this context the space to create a book, led predominantly by Hazara community members in collaboration with non-Hazara individuals and organisations, becomes the 'infrastructure', the 'environment, social relations, and networks of support' (Butler 2016: 21) that creates the grounds for Hazara resistance, freedom to speak and agency to be enacted.

### **Rising action: intracultural differences**

**HPL:** When I gave CPM the idea we should have Hazaragi and Dari, I knew this action will be very different and courageous. Many people think our language is Persian and we are Afghan. We are not Afghan. Afghans are mostly called Pashtuns of Afghanistan. We are Hazara who have their own racial root, language, history, culture and religious sects. Majority people of Hazaras call themselves Afghans it is because of illiteracy, national and international imposing of Afghan words on all, People of Afghanistan.



When we grew up, we talk with pure Hazaragi in the family and in the community which surrounded us. Hazaragi according to some language academics, is a mixture of Persian, Turkish and Mongolian languages. Majority of Hazaras who were raised in Afghanistan, Iran, or Pakistan, became educated in Persian/Dari which is the elite, official and educational language. But in daily life Hazaras speak Hazaragi despite minor linguistic differences due to their location. There is also language difference between Hazaras depending on their environment and geographical location. For example, for Hazaras with Pakistani nationality, Urdu and English are their educational languages. But they speak Hazaragi Quetta in their daily life.

Hazaras are victim of genocide and persecution since 1980s by Pashtun king Abdul Rehman Khan and his foreign supporters. Sixty per cent of Hazaras were massacred, then huge numbers were made slave and sold to neighbour countries of Afghanistan. Since then, Hazaras became refugees, fleeing from their homeland (Hazaristan, central of Afghanistan). Likewise, their existence, identity, culture and language were always victim of discrimination, dismissed and manipulation for the benefit of others political power, racial supremacy and religious causes.

This *Buz-e-Chini*, it was the only story which my grandmother told me in Hazaragi. Hazaragi is beautiful in that sense. Hazaragi don't have its own written alphabet. When I write Hazaragi, I write it with the Persian alphabet. But the same sound of Hazaragi. The language we talk in, I just write it in [Persian alphabet]. It comes from generation to generation orally. When I started writing the story, I asked the opinion of my husband and other family and community's opinion also. They also edit and omit. There is conflict still among Hazaras. Many people uncertain that Hazaragi is a language or dialect. I studied in Persian school. I can express myself in Persian more easily than Hazaragi because of the books, the literature, the academical power. Some Hazaragi linguists say that Hazaragi is a language. Pashtun people, they have language - Pashto. Baluch people, Baluch community - they have Baluchi. Why Hazara should not have their own language? On another hand, Hazaras who were more concentrating on Persian, they said, 'no, this is a dialect of Persian'. And some say the pure native speaker of Persian is Hazara.

My child and new generation of Hazaras in Australia can encounter with two languages of Hazaragi, which he/she speaks at home, and English which is the mainstream language in Australia. I made the book in Hazaragi that a Hazara child should feel proud, clear and included that a language which they talk at home with his family and other Hazaras surrounding is printed with the interesting story of *Buz-e-Chini*. But since there are those who argue that it could also be part of Persian, I include both Hazaragi and Dari. A book like this can save the words of my grandmother. It is a unique and beautiful feeling that makes me feel pride that there is a physical book in the library.

When this book was published after a year, I found it was a rewrite without my permission. It ruin everything. It was a very painful feeling, and I went in complete depression.

### **Commentary: vulnerability in resistance as potential for resignification**

Vulnerability in this space of resistance has a long and complex history shaped by conceptions of ethnic identification, physical appearances, languages, cultural practices and

religious beliefs. While the traditional method of ‘translation’, a method of transmitting words or texts in one language to another, has been part of the processes of translations between Hazaragi, Dari and English, such processes are not straightforward when histories of power, politics, migration and languages are accounted for. When languages do not have their own writing systems and symbols, they can be written through transliteration, a method of mapping one system of writing to another based on phonetic similarity. In the case of Hazaragi, the writing system used is Persian. In relation to the text in Dari, given HPL’s education in Persian, she is writing with a Persian accent. To what extent, her education in Pakistan affects her Persian accent is unknown to us but by her own admission of how people’s linguistic repertoires change as they travel to new spaces, we can assume the Hazaragi/Persian/Dari has its own ‘taste’ in the Bakhtinian sense that ‘each word tastes of a context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions’ (Bakhtin 1981: 293). Such literacy practices are underpinned by a ‘translingual’ orientation to language and language use which challenges conceptions of language as ‘bounded, unitary, and reified’ (May 2014: 1) and instead sees language as socio-political inventions (Makoni and Pennycook 2006) that transcends social, cultural and geographical boundaries, and transgress existing relations of linguistic and political powers. These emerging creative and critical transliteration practices are constitutive of Hazaragi language and literacy practices; they embody what it means to be Hazara. They afford new possibilities for the resignification of recognisable, intelligible Hazara identities. In this way, ‘being affected’ (Butler 2016: 18) opens possibilities for breaking with, deviating from, and reframing established ways in which language acts on people’s lives – ‘being affected’ makes people do things with and to language to create space for desires and new forms of linguistic lives.

### *Climax: challenging authorities*

**CPM:** It was in the aftermath of the Buz-e-chini project, we had drama with the translation – only now, three years later, we have a solution on the horizon. The original translation in both Hazaragi and Dari was done by HPL. It was checked by other members of the community and sent to Pakistan to the Center of Linguistics at the university so, we crossed our ‘T’s and dotted our ‘I’s. I understood how touchy it was to write and publish anything in Hazaragi so I wanted to make sure that I did it properly. We thought we had done it properly. After the book was published, there was a couple of people in the community who were not Hazara who said, ‘this is wrong, this is not how it’s meant to be, the Dari is incorrect, it’s bits and pieces here and there, the language has been blurred’. They don’t represent the Hazara community.

HPL has been the advocate for her people and language, and very socially justice-minded said ‘this is not right, nobody was consulted’. I was not consulted about the republication either. HPL was not consulted about the republication, even though it’s her work. The republication still says that it was translated by her, so that to her, didn’t sit right. Since then, an official investigation consulted independent people and community members to determine which version is truest to how Hazaragi is spoken and what the community wanted the book to achieve through printing in the Hazaragi language. It was important to the community publisher that we wrote a book representing the Afghan community of the city, who are predominantly Hazara.

**HPL:** I and my family were in a huge anger, not because of conflict between Hazaragi and Persian but what has been going on since Afghanistan. Because of the hatred, ignorance of some members of the community, who are not from Hazara community, who is from Persian or Dari speaker. They have always been an elite class in Afghanistan and here also they have the same Afghani concept in view. They always considered Hazara as a second class, but the concept is just cultural and political, which doesn't have any fact. In Afghanistan, they were in official sectors, and here also they're working in offices, in social organisation, in culture and socialisation ... as multilingual officers as representative of Hazaras by the help of Persian language. This kind of societal part or job can give them opportunity to manipulate things for their own benefit. But I say 'no, it is not authentic'. Unfortunately, I am an educated female from Hazaras and just local society, community member so I am disadvantaged. I am a victim of internal rivalry by some Hazaras as well as external rivalries by Dari office workers.

The first book was published in 2018 and the second in 2019. In 2019 when I got the book it was in a very friendly way by an Australian social worker who was involved in the changing of the book. When I came home and open the book, oh my god, easily I understood that it is wrong! Language was manipulated wrongly and it had a lot of linguistic mistakes. They were not my words. It was not real Hazaragi. There are many illegal words that was committed on the book. They rewrite my word, manipulated them. Hazaragi part of the book was completely wrong, easily it was illustrated that the rewritten version was not done by a Hazaragi speaker. They did that without telling me and claimed my writing was wrong.

I thought this was not the time of being angry. I needed to be thoughtful and logical. I started thinking whom I should talk to, how I should raise my voice that it is wrong? In this project, there was a lot of organisations involved. Who will listen to me? Because if there is their benefit, they won't listen you. There was a lady here working for multicultural arts (not CPM) that I felt I can trust her. She connected me to the community publisher. I didn't say my work is right or the second version is wrong to the community publisher. I said that I am happy for them to choose any editor to judge but the editor should be competent in both Hazaragi and Dari languages. I accept whatever they see. My purpose was to serve the culture, the community, the language, the identity.

### *Commentary: resistance to vulnerability*

While bookmaking provides the infrastructure for new forms of linguistic lives to become visible, conceptions of 'authenticity' (things 'with a recognisable origin') and 'legitimacy' (things 'authorised by a recognisable authority') (Kramsch 2012: 115) feature strongly in the quest for the 'correct' notation of Hazaragi in the book by the organisations who developed the project. The authority for notation was, at times, not sought from the community who created it and HPL, but from external, non-Hazara individuals and institutions. Considering the complex negotiations that have gone into the creative and critical transliteration processes described earlier, looking for a centre of authority external to the community members and relying on categories of 'properness', 'right/wrong', 'correct/incorrect' seems paradoxical.

HPL finds herself engulfed in politics of ethnicity, language, culture, class and gender that continue to follow her from Afghanistan to Pakistan to Australia. In claiming her 'writing is wrong', she 'undergoe[s] linguistic vulnerability, and in this sense who [she is], even [her]

ability to survive, depends on the language that sustains [her]' (Butler 2016: 16). In this resettlement context, HPL draws on social conditions of support (i.e. contacting relevant project stakeholders) as a way to break with 'legacies of discourse and institutional power' (Butler 2016: 21) that she has been subjected to throughout her life. To stay silent would be to continue to succumb to symbolic domination that is gendered and exclusive of women in politicised negotiations that is considered 'men's business' (Bourdieu 1991; Busbridge and Winarnita 2015). Although the very constructs of authenticity and legitimacy are left unchallenged in her strategy to reclaim her position as a legitimate speaker, nonetheless HPL's actions enables her to engage in political negotiations and maintain the language that sustains her.

### *Resolution: expanding the network of support*

**HPL:** Now the book has changed back to the original version, I am happy about the result, but I am not happy that I have come through a lot. It gave me a very painful experience and lesson. I feel the history. Hazaras are struggling today in Afghanistan. They are still struggling because of their identity and existence. You can see what happened to me here even in Australia by Afghanistani members who are not Hazaras. Those people, what they did to me, they totally ignored my writing and they put the label of wrong translation. I was very furious. It was wrong, unfair, full of stress and depression. I was shouting that it always happens! People are killed and discriminated. Here also, they are doing this. It is wrong. In our society, 90 per cent are uneducated women but these cultural events and social work activities are conducted by social workers on Hazara women. However, Hazara women are illiterate to the point that they cannot write their names and names of their children. They call themselves Afghan and Persian speakers. But the reality is different from them. I can't be like these women. It is hard for me to be among this kind of women. It's hard to express and convince women of my society.

Probably everyone in this project also thought this is a very small and simple project ... . Afghani people in just English and Persian. Enough! But the project became prolonged because it was in three languages. Now you can see, it is a long story.

From this experience, I want to say everyone should accept their identity, they should respect themselves and others also. A person doesn't accept or respect themselves; they won't respect or accept any other identity or culture. I'm more than happy that my experience and these issues should be expressed, and everyone should know about it. I want others to know. Always I keep things in my heart. I don't like this. I am a person of expression. If there is something wrong or I need better guidance, I appreciate it. If they give me any courage of any idea, I listen, I love to listen. And I love to talk. I'm happy I am in a beautiful Australian country. There are liberated and educated people. They embraced and listened to me.

**CPM:** We also gained various insights. We learned to be more careful of the language to identify communities. For instance, whether to call the community the 'Afghan' community or 'Afghanistani' community, because Afghan is very much associated with that Dari-speaking majority, not the Hazaras. In relation to engaging in community activities, projects like these are also an opportunity for the Hazara women to get together and have a chat. The conversations and the publication of the book allow the community to feel heard. In terms of the actual creation of the books, there was an Hazara mother who

participated in the workshop with her little son. She spoke very little English. When she picked up the book when it was published, she said, 'this is my language. Never seen this before'. She was tearing up because she had never seen her language written down before. She showed her son and said, 'this is our language'.

### *Commentary: vulnerability not as something to overcome but mobilise through infrastructural support*

Recognition of HPL's text has not eradicated feelings of vulnerability nor does HPL see the resolution as a triumph. Her own experience reminds her of the ongoing identity struggles of Hazaras in and outside of Afghanistan (Rodan and Lange 2008; Fischer 2017). The project enabled HPL to establish contacts with various community organisations, extended her work with the community publisher, and developed a relationship with us (academic researchers) to share this experience on a scholarly platform. To be sure, vulnerability still exists at every turn, but it moves about the expanding network of infrastructural support that surrounds her, allowing for 'the exercise of freedom' (Butler 2016: 14) and a 'relax[ing of] the coercive hold of norms ... for the purposes of living a more liveable life' (Butler 2016: 18).

## Discussion

As we have shown through the crafted narrative, in bookmaking projects that seek to support linguistic and cultural sustainability with linguistically precarious multilingual communities, vulnerability, resistance and agency are not clearly separable from one another. For HPL, linguistic vulnerability resonates in the desire for a recognisable and respectable Hazara identity as well as 'a recognition of their difference and the legitimisation of that difference' (Kramsch 2016: 525). She understands Hazaragi as a language inherently constituted by a mixture of languages and varieties that emerge from language use in different environments. Intersecting with this desire for linguistic legitimacy are struggles to recast what HPL considered their 'second class' minority subject position traditionally ascribed to Hazaras and the established gender norms. The struggle to break out of these historical and political constructions through resistance is a symbolic struggle rather than merely a linguistic one because it is a challenge to established power dynamics and moral values. While oppressive power relations will continue in inter- and intra-cultural encounters, studies from a range of migratory and linguistic circumstances show when 'a speaker is able to insist on control over language, both private and public spheres may be enriched' (Samata 2019: 176).

HPL's 'control over language', inter and intracultural negotiations, are situated within the community bookmaking project which mirror the political conflicts with language and culture in refugee 'speech communities' prevalent in multicultural Australia (Butler 2016). Bookmaking in this context provides a ground for resistance. Resistance, in this project, comes in the form of making a devalued language connected to historical and ongoing persecution of the Hazara people, visible using transliteration practices. Featuring Hazaragi, alongside Dari and English, is itself an act of resistance. It is staking a claim to the importance of having a written version of one's cultural language that in the context of a resettlement country where daily life is heavily dominated by English. When language sustenance and sustainability, which are constitutive of her sense of

identity, are threatened, it provokes HPL to break with the context. Infrastructural networks of support (i.e. HPL reaching out to the multicultural arts officer who then contacts the community publisher) are drawn on to facilitate reviews that then restores the power to Hazara speakers. While notating oral languages can never be a straightforward act, the work involved in sharing this in a published form was a means for the HPL to ‘insist on control over language’ and publicly claim her linguistic and cultural identity and subjectivity.

However, as pointed out in numerous studies of linguistic resistance towards reframing power inequalities (see Hua and Kramersch 2016), often the ‘counter-moves only reverse the power relations without necessarily changing the context itself. The challenge ... is the need to redefine the distribution of symbolic power altogether’ (Kramersch 2016: 526). While HPL’s request to judge her original work does not rely on review by native or non-native speakers of Hazaragi (she requests someone ‘who knows Hazaragi and Dari’), the very constructs of authenticity, legitimacy and who is the source of authority in community-led projects, are left unchallenged in the strategy to reclaim her position as a legitimate and knowledgeable Hazaragi speaker. Problematising the constructs of right or wrong, ownership over a language, and linguistic and cultural authenticity in assessing a transliterated text where a language (such as Hazaragi) is represented through the language of the Other (in this case Persian), would enable discussions that decentre established authorities, rather than simply reverting to ideas of language use as bounded to nationalist agendas and monolingual native speaker authorities. In critiquing categorisations such as native and non-native speakers as harmful ideas that cannot escape their roots in nationalism, racism and colonialism, Pennycook states we need a ‘problematising of the epistemology that produces the distinction’ and to ‘turn our critical gaze on those categories that are also part of the identity struggle’ (2012: 96–97). Although HPL’s resistance and activism may have been successful in being recognised as a ‘legitimate’ speaker, dominant cultural and linguistic discourses remain unchallenged.

In an era of increasing diversity, global mobility and ‘trans-modern multilingualism’ (Pennycook 2007), more diversity does not mean more openness or acceptance and disappearance of negative feelings. Feelings of vulnerability can be more subtle, less visible, connected to much more complex categorisation and uncertainty. It is not linguistic competence per se that can recast the already signified but instead, community members working across the symbolic realm, in creative and critical ways that represent their language use that opens possibilities for new forms of linguistic lives.

Participation in public storytelling can be a means to record and share cultures. For refugees sharing stories and languages in diaspora, this can be particularly significant for cultures to continue to live in new places and communities. This community book-making project sees *The Legend of Buz-e-Chini* available for Hazara people in the local community and beyond. It will be distributed more widely again through local and national libraries. This article only canvasses part of the long story of this project, and necessarily is a partial examination of the activism, challenges, work and knowledge exchanges that has, and will continue to be, a feature of this collaboration. It is however a case study that reveals to a scholarly community interested in genuine collaborations with refugees about how linguistic vulnerability is a generative place for resistance and agency. It shows that a livable linguistic life for Hazara people in countries of



resettlement is an ongoing quest that can be supported when the people and institutions that comprise the infrastructure respect Hazara skills and knowledge, understand the complexities of language and have an openness to their expertise in language, particularly those from the linguistic precariat, coming from within refugee communities.

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## Ethics

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