

# Growing Up Bilingual in Australia

A ViệtSpeak Podcast - Episode 6

Title: Moon at the Market

[THEME MUSIC]

Chi Vu: Hi, welcome to *Growing Up Bilingual in Australia*, the podcast where we speak with bilingual children and their parents about language, culture and what it feels like to be multilingual in Australia. I'm Chi Vu, a writer and educator, and with me is Hoang Tran, a member of the language advocacy group ViệtSpeak.

[Sounds from Footscray Street Market]

On today's episode, we meet Moon and his dad Tony.

[Moon and Tony at the street market]

Right now they're selling plants at the Footscray Street Market, in Melbourne's west.

[Moon and Tony at the street market]

Soon we'll be back at their home in Footscray to hear more about their experiences as a bilingual family.

By the way, in Tony and Moon's household, Vietnamese is spoken more often than English, which means in this episode, you'll hear more Vietnamese than you might have previously in this series. I'll provide snippets of contextual information for English speakers throughout. This is all part and parcel of what it means to grow up bilingual in Australia.

Moon Bui: I'm moon and I'm 12 years old. I was in year six. And I go to St. Monica Primary School. [Vietnamese] Con tên Moon, con 12 tuổi, con học lớp 6, con học trường St Monica.

Chi: Vietnamese – Tên tiếng Việt của con là gì? [What's your Vietnamese name?]

Moon: Tên tiếng Việt của con là Hồ [My name is Ho, lake.]

Chi: Like 'lake'. Were you born here or in Vietnam?

Moon: I was born here. Yeah. And after one years later, I went to Vietnam.

Chi: Oh, when you were one years old, you went to Vietnam? Yeah. For how long?

Moon: For four or five years.

Chi: Sống ở đó năm năm? Moon có nhớ không? [You lived there for five years, do you remember your time there?]

Moon: Nhớ [I remember]

Chi: What do you remember?

Moon: I remember going to kindergarten and childcare. You go to school very early and go home, kind of late compared to here.

Chi: How many kids in in the classroom?

Moon: Like 20 something kid in the classroom?

Chi: Where they all Vietnamese kids?

Moon: Yeah.

Chi: Yeah. And so you had to speak Vietnamese? Did you learn English as well in Vietnam?

Moon: Yeah. I did learn English in Vietnam. A little bit.

Chi: At the same kindergarten and school or different.

Moon: Different

Chi: Different, so you went somewhere else to learn English? Yeah. Okay. What did it feels like to learn English while you were in Vietnam?

Moon: It was like, ah difficult. Because I haven't speak that language yet..

Chi: Did you think that you would live there in Vietnam forever? Or do you think you would come back to Australia?

Moon: First, I thought I was going stay in Vietnam. And then I know that I was gonna go to Australia.

Chi: Okay, so before you came back to Australia, what did you know? Or think about Australia?

Moon: I think like a, the house was big, and there's not much apartment.

Chi: And did you look forward to it? Or you're a bit nervous?

Moon: I was looking forward to.

Chi: Oh, great. Yeah. Nhớ cái gì, khi mới qua Úc. [What do you remember when you first came to Australia?]

Moon: I remember that. Was kind of cold, even though it was spring. And they were sunny a lot. And things, the rooms, I feel that the rooms were very big.

Chi: The room that you were in.

Moon: Yeah. And now I got used to it. Yeah. And I remember that the school basketball court was never went to the end. Yeah, but now I see that it is normal.

Chi: What about the food? What did you notice?

Moon: I really like the whole food when I came here. I remember like, fish and chips, like burgers and chicken nugget.

Chi: Ah. Oh, and you liked all of these when you were eating when you ate it when you first entered Australia.

Moon: Especially burgers. Are you really like burgers?

[Street market sounds]

Chi: Moon's dad, Tony Bui, has been living in Australia since the early 2000's

Tony Bui: Tony qua Úc 18 năm rồi. Ngày xưa thì Tony qua đi du học Master. [I came to Australia 18 years ago. I first came here to study my Masters.] I think I'm similar to many overseas students. I come here I feel absolutely alone and I feel sad. I went back to Vietnam actually. After three years, I feel more comfortable and I love Australia. When I came to Australia one thing I see a lot of is Vietnamese kids in Australia, when they grow up, they cannot speak Vietnamese. I really worry that my children will get the same. But one time when I when I was a waiter in restaurant I speak to Vietnamese customer, it changed my mind because this lady, she can speak Vietnamese very well. When I talked to her she explained to me that she is a third generation, not one, not two, the third. But speak Vietnamese very fluently. She was born in France, she had never came to Vietnam. So it changed my mind that the environment is not a problem.

Chi: Yeah, so a lot of people think that so maybe it's impossible to teach the second generation, definitely the third generation, the ancestral heritage language. But when you met this customer who had never even been to Vietnam before and she

was third generation she could still speak perfect Vietnamese and that made you change your mind.

Tony: I can detect her because her accent some different, maybe miss some tones, but she can speak very well.

Chi: And that that moment you realized it was possible.

Tony: Yeah, she can speak very well Vietnamese, French and English. She have Australian husband here.

Chi: Wow. And then so because you saw that it could happen you then started thinking how can I do this so that my children can hold on to Vietnamese? Because most families cannot, it's very hard.

Tony: My children's speak a lot Vietnamese at home, and when they they come to school and we can get some problem in language. It scares me that the children can cannot follow the class cannot follows their friends. Make a pressure to parent that I see that another family have the same problem.

Chi: Yeah, let's slow down for a second because what you're saying is really important. So some of the pressure that parents face is this idea that maybe if they focus too much on teaching the heritage language, Vietnamese in this case, then maybe their kids will fall behind in school. Maybe they can't follow catch up with the English curriculum. And then so because of that, they're worried. And they might say to their kids, okay, even though our kids are all Vietnamese speakers, we don't want them to Speak in Vietnamese with each other. We want them to, you know, make sure that English catches up with the monolingual English, you know, Australian students, and then perhaps some schools as well put pressure on bilingual kids, because they think oh these kids are not as fluent as the monolingual kids. Yeah, so these are some of the problems that and challenges that parents face that you've identified, thank you.

[Street market sounds]

Chi: You've been here now six years in Australia. How do you keep and keep growing your Vietnamese?

Moon: I speak at home.

Chi: Yeah. You speak Vietnamese at home to your parents. And your younger siblings? What else do you do to keep your Vietnamese?

Moon: I read books and comics in Vietnamese.

Chi: Oh. Which comics?

Moon: Dragonball, Doremon. Yeah.

Chi: And do they have Vietnamese names? Yeah, yeah. What are they?

Moon: Dragonball in Vietnamese is 7 Viên Ngọc Rồng

Chi: And Doremon?

Moon: Is Doremon, a little bit different [Laughter].

Chi: So you can read these in Vietnamese? Yeah. Amazing.

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Tony: Cấy điều quan trọng là dành thời gian cho con cái, tái vì có nhiều người phụ huynh cứ nguyên lý do là bận làm hay là và có giú hoãn cát được con. Như vậy thì làm sao là để mình giống như là một bạn với con? Thì nói chuyện với nó thì dành thời gian cho nó thôi. Thì Tony cũng dành thời gian nhất là trước khi đi ngủ thật ra là cũng chỉ 15 phút thôi, nhưng mà trước khi đi ngủ thì các con cũng thích nghe kể chuyện. Thì ban đầu thì kể chuyện của tích. Sau đó thì còn gì kể thì kể tân mình, hồi nhỏ ba sao? Nó rất thích nghe kể hồi nhỏ ba rà sao.

[The important point to the make time for your kids. Many parents feel like they are too busy. But if so how will you be with them, see them as friends? I make time to talk with them. One thing I do is at bedtime for 15 minutes, my kids like listening to stories. So I tell them stories. I tell them what my life was like when I was young.

[Laughter]

Tony: I think it very important that the parent share their time project children talk to them as the friends very important especially Vietnamese parents, they often keep distance to their children and they explain that I'm so busy in work, but it's not true. If you want you can have time for example I spend the time before they go to bed, in English they call that story-time before bed. But I don't read book, I tell them anything. They really love it they want to hear any anything I talk to them. I talk about my own story. They often ask "Can you tell me about my own." I tell them about my experience. The first time I came to Australia, how was the life in Australia, I live in Vietnam, everything. I can tell about the tales, the Vietnamese tales, even the Greek tales, anything, I say to them.

Tony: Cấy thự nhận đó thì thứ nhất là giúp cho giáng kịch gia đình. Thứ hai là giúp cho con hiểu mình. Và cái thích ngôn ngữ và cũ kiến thức học được vì với đó. Đặc biệt là cấy chuyền thống gia đình, với lại như là tại sao có ngày tết, tại sao có bánh chưng. Rất là nhiều người không biết chuyền đó, nhưng mà con Tony ăn bánh chưng rất là bình thường. Nhưng mà vấn đề bánh trưng con nít không thích ăn. Như vậy thì có phải van ép trong đó một phần laê mình phải kể câu chuyện tại sao nó quan trọng, cho nó thấy là có ý nghĩa cho nó ăn.

[This has the benefit of first the kids understand me more. Secondly, they understand the value of family, or why there is Lunar New Year's Day and New Year's cake. My kids are now familiar so they can eat new years cake like its normal. So by telling the story of the cake, why its important, they understand the meaning behind eating the cake.]

Hoang Tran: Does this teaching your kids Vietnamese does it feel less alone to be living in Australia?

Tony: Sure, we will feel more comfortable because we live in Australia but we still keep are very traditional style family. At home we still cook Vietnamese food and we still speak Vietnamese language. So very, very comfortable.

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Moon: I speak Vietnamese to Vietnamese kids because they most of the kids, Vietnamese kids, in school now knows how to speak Vietnamese very well. Yeah. And for other people, they can't speak Vietnamese a lot, so I have to speak English. And there's also other kid that's not Vietnamese, I speak English to all of them.

Chi: So it sounds like a school where if you speak other languages, as well as English, then there's no problem, no one's gonna pick on you. Yeah, that's great.

Moon: And a teacher encouraged us to speak other language other than English.

Chi: Oh really Yeah. Can you tell me how they do that? What do they say?

Moon: They allow us to speak any language and they enter they encourage us. As long as people in the group understand.

Chi: Okay, so long as you're not like being disruptive to the teacher or anything like that. Do you sometimes get asked to help translate things into Viet? Can you tell me more about that?

Moon: There is some kid came from, they just got here from Vietnam, and they're not too good in English, so I have to translate for them.

Chi: Okay. So the teacher will, you know, be teaching the class in English. And then she might look at you and say, or she might, you know, get everyone to be doing their own work. But she asks you 'Moon can you help this student?' Yeah. And then you quietly just explain what she said. Yeah. How does that make you feel to be able to do that?

Moon: Quite good. Yeah.

Chi: What do you learn from translating for others?

Moon: I learned some more Vietnamese.

Chi: Yeah. Because what happens if you get stuck? And you don't know the, like, a new word in English, and you don't know the Vietnamese word?

Moon: I didn't know the Vietnamese word, but there's other way to say it.

Chi: Over time, do you need to do that less? Do you do that less because their English is catching up? Yeah. And then at some point, they just don't need you anymore.

Moon: Yeah, but they will there will still play with me. There will be some new kid coming in.

Chi: The reason why I asked that because maybe sometimes people have the wrong understanding. And they think that if you've helped someone by translating for them then they never learned English but that's obviously not the case.

Moon: They still learn English.

Chi: It just makes their life a bit easier. And they're not confused for a year.  
[Laughter] When you speak Vietnamese to your friends do use their name or *mày*, or *em*, *anh*? Which one do you use?

Moon: *Mày*.

Chi: *Mày*, haha.

[Street Market sounds]  
[THEME MUSIC]

Chi: You've been listening to *Growing up bilingual in Australia*, the podcast where we speak with bilingual children and their parents about language, culture and what it feels like to be multilingual in Australia.

For bonus materials and transcripts from this episode, head to [vietbilingual.org/podcast](http://vietbilingual.org/podcast)

For the bonus episode I speak with Tony in more detail about how he facilitates language learning for his children.

Moon: *Growing Up Bilingual in Australia* is hosted by Chi Vu, and produced by Hoang Tran Nguyen. Script development is by Lisa Divissi and Chi Vu. Music is by Quang Dinh.