# Language Brokering Affects Bilingual Children Parents' Acculturation Processes in South Texas

**MA. Julien Ekiaka-Oblazamengo**
Department of Teacher & Bilingual Education
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
MSC 196, 700 University Blvd
Kingsville, TX 78363-8202

**M.Ed. Mónica Rosalina Medina-Jiménez**
Department of Teacher & Bilingual Education
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
MSC 196, 700 University Blvd
Kingsville, TX 78363-8202

**Dr. Valentin Ekiaka Nzai**
Assistant Professor & Graduate Coordinator (M.S. in Bilingual Education)
Department of Teacher & Bilingual Education
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
MSC 196, 700 University Blvd
Kingsville, TX 78363-8202

## Abstract

*Many bilingual children translate for their parents or relatives in a wide range of contexts (Baker, 2006; Corona et al, 2012; De Jong, 2011). In fact, language brokering plays an important role in the acculturation process of bilingual children. However, this practice has been negatively viewed by advocates of fractional perspective of bilingualism (De Jong, 2011). Most studies (Corona et al, 2012; De Jong, 2011 & Orellana, 2009) have focused on the child-broker. Few projects have explored this topic targeting bilingual children's parents (Kam, 2011).The purpose of this narrative research consists of exploring how language brokering practices affect bilingual children's parents acculturation processes through the examination of the following research question: to what extent language brokering practices impact bilingual children parents' acculturation processes in a subtractive bilingualism setting? As a sample of six parents agreed to participate in the data collection process using the Ginsburg approach. Findings suggest not only conditions under which language brokering practices are positively appreciated, but also significant impact on parental acculturation processes.*

## 1. Introduction

One of the consequences of immigration waves to South Texas is that the majority of recent arrivals, from Latin American countries, fall into the category of immigrants with little schooling (García, 2005). Most of their children have to attend school where they quickly learn English and become translators for their parents and relatives. By translating for their family members, children are fulfilling one of the characteristics of what is called 'Language Brokering' (LB).

In this article, LB is more than just translating solely for family members. LB consists of having bilingual children translating, interpreting, negotiating, advocating, etc. in a wide range of daily situations for their Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, relatives, and other people (Baker, 2006; Corona et al, 2012; Orellana, 2009, 2010) who cannot communicate in the interlocutor's language.

Unfortunately, the public opinion about LB practices has never been positive (Orellana, 2009). In fact, based on research studies in clinical psychology regarding children as brokers (Love & Buriel, 2007; Minuchin, 1974; Orellana, 2009), reductionist practitioners of bilingualism and multilingualism-multiculturalism (De Jong, 2011) have negatively labeled the entire LB practices, its effects, and real target. For the purposes of this research, the parents or family members are considered the target of LB practices.

Although past research (Love & Buriel, 2007; Minuchin, 1974) has indicted a negative connotation for the practice of LB, when evaluated through optimistic lenses, examining for the positive elements, LB practices had a positive impact.  Research studies have always targeted the child broker (Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; Cline, Crafter, O'Dell, & Guida de Abreu, 2011; Kam, 2011; Orellana, 2009; Weisskirch, 2007), and therefore little is known about the effects of LB practices in parental acculturation processes in South Texas.

The purpose of this research paper is for educators and researchers in bilingual/multilingual education to determine and explore how language brokering practices affect the acculturation processes of parents of bilingual children in South Texas. In order to address the purpose of our research, we will explore the following research question: to what extent do language brokering practices impact bilingual children parents' acculturation processes in a subtractive bilingual setting?

At this stage, language brokering might be defined as the practice of having bilingual children translating, interpreting, and advocating for their family and other people in wide range of daily situations (Baker, 2006; De Jong, 2011; Orellana, 2009). Bilingual children or 'brokers' refers to the young agents who perform LB to help their 'immigrants' and limited English proficient (LEP) parents. Acculturation means a process of psychological and cultural changes that follows the contact with another culture (Mahmud & Schölmerich, 2011).

Considering that language brokering thrives in a social context and in bilingualism, the theoretical framework followed in our research is the educational sociology of language as developed by Joshua Fishman in 1972. This theory was used to study and analyze the relationship between languages and society, especially the effects of languages on a society. Of course, there are numerous effects of a language. According to Baker (2006), learning a language implies learning its culture. In the case of many children translating for their parents, Baker (2006), Buriel et al (1998), and De Jong (2011) suggested that these children not only translate, explain sentences or words, but also interpret and explain the mainstream culture and society to their parents. In other words, they are cultural ambassadors for their family members.

Certainly, findings reported in this article are also informative for parents, scholars, and educators in general, as long as all these latter educational agents can see their negative thinking of LB practices very influenced. Furthermore, results of this research can provide insightful conditions for the betterment of brokering practices as they foster parents as cultural insiders of U.S. culture. Finally, findings may be used as a strong and supportive argument for school migrant agents, social workers for immigrants to promote parental involvement at school and social integration to the community.

To help our readers better understand the content of this qualitative research, in the next sections we will briefly review the previous studies on LB, and then explain the acculturation frame that we based our inquiry. Finally, we will draw some conclusions and implications for LB and education best practices, but not without first presenting and analyzing our findings.

## 2. Language Brokering: Literature Review

There is bipolarity in the research made on LB referring to children's academic performance and bicultural competence while practicing LB. Buriel, et al (1998)'s findings suggested the acceleration of their cognitive and socio-emotional development which may be positively or negatively seen.  As they are exposed to cross-cultural interactions, the more brokering experiences children had the higher their level of biculturalism and social self-efficacy.

Similar findings were disseminated by Acoach and Webb (2004) when analyzing the impact of brokering practices on Hispanic teenagers' processes of acculturation and academic achievement: children became more adapted to function in mainstream culture while conserving their own cultural identity. This explains why immigrant adolescent development is constantly shaped by cultural and language brokering practices (Dorner, Orellana, & Jiménez, 2008).

In dual-language immersion classrooms, LB affects the learning process. Despite some unintended outcomes due to the great variety of psychological experience of LB in children (Wu & Yeong Kim, 2009), LB fosters social nature of learning; it positively impacts children's active participation (Coyoca & Sook Lee, 2009). In other words, bilingual speakers with brokering experience think that LB is a normal and appreciable activity. Also, in terms of attitudes, monolingual students do not look down at bilingualism and LB practices (Cline et al, 2011).

Contrary to the positive view of LB, in clinical psychology, children brokers present some patterns of attitudes that are not recommendable for their normal development. After examination of parent-child relationship, findings are presented in the following framing words: "parentified child", "adultification", "parentification" of children brokers, role reversal, and weakness of parental authority (Love & Buriel, 2007). Likewise, looking for a rapport between adolescents' psychological health and the quality of a parent-child affinity, a poor psychological development has been detected at Chinese immigrant adolescents (in Canada) who held strong family obligations or perceived parents as over controlling (Hu & Costigan, 2012).

Other research conducted in the last decade revealed the correlation between language the high demand of brokering practices and the emotional and academic achievement of Latino parents and adolescents: the higher the demand is the higher level of family stress and poor academic achievement for children (Martinez Jr., Heather, & Eddy, 2009). Furthermore, children brokers feel angry, scared, ashamed, embarrassed, nervous, uncomfortable, and obligated when they practice LB in a dysfunctional family (Weisskirch, 2007).

Nevertheless, some scholars display a more complex panorama of LB when putting into a balance both its positive and negative aspects in their studies. The analysis of LB and mental health and risky behaviors of Mexican school-age young in Arizona sprinkled the following results: LB is positively related to family-based acculturation stress but negatively to alcoholic use and risky behaviors (Kam, 2011). On a similar tone, Latino parents and adolescents think that LB is helpful to the family but it creates difficulties when children deal with the complexity of words in health settings (Corona et al, 2012) and in parents-teacher conferences (García-Sánchez, Orellana, & Hopkins, 2011).

In summation, some immigrant parents rely on their children brokers as a strong support which allows them to 'function' in the new culture (Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). However, this functionality in the new culture does not explicitly imply acculturation. In the next section we will briefly review the acculturation processes framework as applied in this research.

## 3. Acculturation processes

People who migrate to other countries have several and individual reasons to do so. International business or investment, studies, family visit or just looking for a better life are some reasons why people immigrate. Upon their arrival into the new country, they face the issue of the adaptation process that may come at a cost and/or failure without a good understanding of the differences between cultures (Routamaa & Hautala, 2008). In fact, their disposition to adapt, or not to, a new culture always is the point of departure of not only many external conflicts – with the native citizens of the host country – but also internal conflicts (psychological, mental, etc.).

At this point, it is important to recall the stages of cultural adaptation when immigrating to another country. First of all, people experience a feeling of happiness and fascination. This is the "Honeymoon stage" where everything is new and very exciting. When the excitement period vanishes, another period of disappointment, confusion and frustration starts. It is the "Culture Shock stage" characterized by a clear distinction of the differences between native and host cultures (linguistic, social, loneliness feelings, different religious practices, etc.). These feelings can be overcome during the "Recovering stage" in which the 'newcomer', (better said 'incomer') gradually makes adjustments, feels more confident in his/her language skills, gets involved in the local community, etc. The "Adaptation stage" (acceptance and adjustment) happens when the incomer has a realistic vision of similarities and differences, so that determining the likes and dislikes means being able to appreciate aspects of both cultures. The newcomer has a clear idea of becoming 'bicultural' and of building a comfort zone with the new culture. This comfort zone is sometimes put into a risk when he/she returns home: this is called "Reverse culture shock" in which the 'newcomer' may need a new adjustment process as the above (Counseling Center at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2007).

Throughout all this adaptation period, the incomer's cultural status can fluctuate in four categories: separation, assimilation, integration (adaptation), and marginalization (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). Individual's acculturation level may be explained as approaching one of four different models resulting from social interactions. These models are explained in the table below.

**Table 01: Acculturation models**

|  | **Features** | **Attitude to native culture** | **Attitude to other culture(s)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Assimilation** | Individual decreases the significance of native culture; desires to identify & interact primarily with the dominant culture. | Negative | Positive |
| **Separation** | Individual holds on the original culture and avoids interaction with & learning the other culture (s). | Positive | Negative |
| **Marginalization** | Little involvement in maintaining native culture and in learning about the other culture (s). | Negative | Negative |
| **Integration** | Individual shows interest in maintaining native culture & in learning, participating in the other. | Positive | Positive |
| **Adaptation sources:** Balls, Organista, Marin, & Chum (2010), Berry (1997, 2003), Berry, Kim, & Boski (1988) | | | |

Newman (1973) has differentiated the assimilation from the acculturation: the assimilation is best illustrated as culture A + culture B + culture C = culture A, because A was the dominant culture. Some other scholars affirmed that the traditional concept of acculturation implies the replacement of the original culture by a new one (John, Phipps, Davis, & Koo, 2005). This was and is the meaning of the American 'melting pot'. Beside the cultural categories above, there can be another named "amalgamation" or accommodation illustrated as culture A + culture B + culture C = culture D, an intermingled of all the previous cultures (Newman, 1973). This is the real meaning of the cultural melting pot.

Later, this conception was replaced by models of biculturalism (Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, Wallisch, McGrath, & Spence, 2008). These models are similar to the Newman's (1973) cultural pluralism or acculturation as A + B + C = A + B + C or A1 + B1 + C1, as all the cultures maintain their own or the majority of their cultural identity (salad bowl concept). However, acculturation is best described as a normal process between the incomer and host's cultures, process which requires setting time and loci (Gallo, Penedo, Espinosa de los Monteros, & Arguelles, 2009).

In fact, acculturation was initially defined by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) as "the phenomena which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p.149). The individual response to acculturation depends on previous circumstances, specific attitudinal and behavioral preferences, characteristics and level of involvement that individuals may have toward both native and host cultures (Berry, 2003).

Consequently, this is the adopted definition of acculturation: "the process of cultural and psychological change that follows when a group of individuals having different cultures comes in contact with a new culture" (Mahmud & Schölmerich, 2011, p. 278). Three strategies command this adjustment process: incomer foreigners can psychologically adjust their behaviors to the new environment, or they may force the change of the environment, or they may give up and move to a better environment (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). However, according to Berry (1997), acculturation may encourage more change in one of the groups than in the other: change in social structure, economic base, and political organization on one hand, or in individual behavior, identity, values, and attitudes on the other (Jun, Gentry, Ball, & González-Molina, 1994).

## 4. Methods

As suggested above, this research is qualitatively grounded in a narrative strategy. From a snowball technique we selected eight adults Latino immigrants who agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. They all reside in South Texas, the region that lies from San Antonio to Rio Grande, the natural boundary of the U.S. and Mexico. Our participants were from Kingsville area and San Antonio.

As a limited sampling, our participants had to meet the following prerequisites for the purpose of our study: a) be new immigrants residing in South Texas for at least five years, b) be 25 years old or up, c) be unbalanced bilinguals, and d) be parents of at least one elementary or middle-school student. We built our semi-structured interviews around four principal questions and many following-up questions, all grouped in four principal themes: English proficiency, LB practices, acculturation processes, and general perceptions and opinions on LB practices. Data were gathered according to Ginsburg's (1989) narrative approach. The core of this approach consists of analyzing participants' life stories during the interviews characterized by a "relation of power, at a particular historical moment" (Ginsburg as cited in Riessman, 1993, p. 31).

In fact, reporting stories at first person (giving active voice to participants), comparing plot line, locating the cultural script and the counter-narrative, and looking for similarities, differences, and broad sense among the data are the features of Ginsburg's narrative strategy.  The features above provided us with a strong basis for interpreting the data collected: arranging selected snapshots representing findings from participants. Findings of this research were trustily compared, reviewed by  two faculty experts in narrative research, and some themes emerged were deeply retaken by and with participants.

In collecting data, researchers had to deal with challenges due to the nature of a qualitative research: the level of objectivity due to the affective filters through which interviewees treat the information. Accordingly, some interviews were conducted through the Internet (filling the interview forms), which implied both misunderstanding of some questions and lack of natural setting to gather data. Finally, we looked for the alternative solution above due to the difficulty of arranging interviews schedule; some interviewees' schedule became very hectic.

To address the trustworthiness of the research findings we constantly compared data, we submitted findings to be reviewed by two faculty experts in qualitative research, and we shared emerging themes with participants so they could provide feedback as to its accuracy. The process of research participants checking the emerging findings is essential in assuring that conclusions were aligned which participants' narratives.

## 5. *Findings*

Four relevant themes emerged from comparative narrative analysis of our sampling: English proficiency, language brokering practices, acculturation processes, and general perceptions and opinions on LB.

### a.    English Proficiency

In general, our participants used different terminologies to self-rate their actual level of proficiency in English. They either differentiated leaning levels of English learning or they used numerical scale form to evaluate the four competences of language learning. Pau and Mista used the numerical scale: *"Considero que en estos momentos es un nivel siete, porque hoy día puedo leer y traducir. En cuanto a conversación, considero que estoy en un nivel cinco"* [Now I give myself a seven, because I can read and translate. As for speaking, I am at a level five], Pau said. Mista seconded: *"Yo me evalúo en un 75% hablarlo y lo entiendo mucho mejor (…); el expresar las ideas en orden correcta, gramatical, la estructura en sus tiempos, ahí tengo que trabajar ya"* [I self-rate a 75% at speaking English and I understand it better (…); when it comes to express correctly and grammatically my thoughts, to structurally follow the pace (?), it is where I have to work].

The other participants referred to the learning levels to self-rate. Pamiche stated: *"Puedo leer y escribir, tal vez mantener una conversación básica pero tengo mucha dificultad para entenderlo"* [I can read and write, maybe to carry on a basic conversation but it is hard for me to understand it]. Sopas followed the same line: she could read, speak, and maintain a basic conversation in English only when the interlocutor is using basic words and speaks clearly. Additionally, Copos and Lom self-placed in a basic and basic-intermediary level respectively. Metos was the only participant who said not having any reading, speaking skill in English. While Maria could read, speak and keep a basic conversation in English.

Participants were asked to share their feelings as newcomers in the U.S. without knowing English. All the participants agreed that they felt isolated, intimidated, out of series, disorientated, frustrated, and insecure or they experienced fear and embarrassment. Metos said: *"Me sentía sola porque no podía comunicarme con alguien"* [I experienced loneliness because I could not communicate with anybody]. Maria also stated: *"Me sentí intimidada. Trataba de evitar la comunicación con personas que hablaban Inglés"* [I was intimidated, trying to avoid contact with speakers of English]. However, Sopas' case was a little bit different:

"*Al llegar a los Estados Unidos yo ya había estudiado Inglés básico en México. Pero al escuchar el Inglés en personas de diferentes nacionalidades, me resulto como si no supiera nada; y sigo con el mismo problema*" [When I got to the U.S. , I already learned a basic English in Mexico. But I felt as I did not have learned anything when I was listening to different speakers from other countries; and I still have the same problem now].

The excerpts above clearly indicated that our participants were still unbalanced bilinguals at the time the interviews were conducted. Even though some of them had some basic knowledge of English from their home country, it resulted hard for them to understand it due to the lack of exposure to the different phonologic systems of the language (Ohio State University Department of Linguistics, 2011). Yet, our participants are unbalanced bilinguals. But is this status required to appeal to language brokering practices?

### b.    Language Brokering Practices

In general, LB was a usual and frequent practice among unbalanced bilingual immigrants. When asked to tell us the moment and the reason why they felt they need language brokers, they spoke out panoply of circumstances from schooling to medical purposes, reading books in English, house services (answering phone calls), banks, etc. Lom thought that she needed LB as soon as she arrived in the U.S.: "*A pocos días de llegar a este país fue claro que nececitaba ayuda. Sin embargo, sentí mucha necesidad cuando mis hijos comenzaron a ir a la escuela y yo no podía ayudarlos e involucrarme como hubiera querido si hablara el idioma*" [As soon as I arrived in this country, I knew I needed help. However, I realized that I needed it (LB) more when my children started attending school and I could not help them and be more involved in their education as I would love to be if I knew English]. Sopas was convinced that she needed LB also to communicate with people culturally diverse: "*Al asistir al médico de no tener conocimiento de los términos y palabras médicas, al interactuar con los amigos de mi esposo (hindúes, griegos, etc.) que lo pronuncian el Inglés de formas diferentes*" [When I went to the Doctor and I didn't know the medical terminologies, when I had to interact with my husband's friends (from India, Greece, etc.) who have a different pronunciation]. Religious reasons also persuaded Copo to require LB: "*Cuando iba a la iglesia o a las tiendas y no entendía lo que el sacerdote o las cajeras me decían*" [When I had to go to church or to the stores and I couldn't understand what the priest or the cashiers were saying].

However, they had their preferred brokers within the family. Pau's preferred broker was her young son because of her patient attitude. Mista had to ask for her husband's services. Pamiche was too close to her niece; Metos' daughter was the preferred one: "*Mi hija, porque ella atendia a la escuela y podía ayudarme, porque no había traductores*" [My daughter, because she was attending school and could help me; because there was a lack of translators]. Sopas had two assistants: "*Primero mi esposo quien tiene un 100 % de Inglés y ahora mi hija de ocho años que al estar en la escuela ya habla y entiende el Inglés*" [First, my husband because he masters English at 100%, and now my eight years old daughter who now goes to school and started speaking and understanding English].

Lom also preferred her husband whose native language is English and her children to help her. Copo relied on her husband's help because he was born and he grew up in the U.S, so he spoke both English and Spanish. Maria's children were more joinable and learned faster than her. She preferred them to feel herself more comfortable.

Not surprisingly, according to our participants young family members brokering were not obliged to 'broker' for them. It was a family help (Orellana, 2009). Pau expressed her perceptions: "*No, pero si es una gran ayuda, al menos cada día aprendo una palabra nueva*" [It is not (an obligation), but it's very helpful; at least I learn one new word every day]. Mista insisted on the independent learning: "*No es obligación, fue cubrir una necesidad. Ahora mi desenvolvimiento es independiente de él (…)*" [It's not an obligation, it was a necessity. Now I am independent].

Accordingly, Sopas emphasized on the effort that she made to understand and on the broker's will: "*No, no es su obligación ya que yo hago un esfuerzo por escuchar y entender lo que leo o escucho; pero cuando ellos pueden, me ayudan*" [No, it is not an obligation. Yet, I make an effort to listen and understand what I am Reading or hearing; but whenever they can, they help me]. Similarly Maria stated: "*No. De ninguna manera es obligación de ellos, pero hay ocasiones en que ellos ven mi necesidad y ellos me ayudan voluntariamente*" [No, no way! It is not an obligation for them, but sometimes they just perceive that I need (brokering) and they help me voluntarily]. Diverse aspects or contexts were named by participants when it came to determine where and in which particular circumstances they needed LB the most: discussing educational (school) and medical matters, analyzing legal documents, at stores or restaurants, at administrative offices, at church, brief most of them underlined the necessity of LB for educational and medical purposes, as Lom said:

*"En circunstancias que tenían que ver con la educación y salud de mis hijos principalmente. Pero pocas veces en la vida social"* [Mainly in situations or contexts related to my children' education and health, but rarely in my social life].

The inference that can be made from Lom's answer is intrinsically related to the acculturation stage she was going through when she recently arrived in the U.S: she might not have to interact so much with people linguistically and culturally diverse in her social life.

On the brokers' availability, participants generally agreed that they were not always available. Being more optimistic, Pamiche expressed the same idea: *"Si siempre ha estado dispuesta, solo que en ocasiones, por cuestiones de tiempo, le ha sido imposible ayudarme"* [She always has been (available) except sometimes due to a lack of time, it was impossible for her to help me]. This means that brokers might have their own activities (working or at school) to do rather than brokering for our participants. This situation was challenging them to study or learn English, as Mista recognized: *"El me motiva a hacer las cosas para mi mismo y seguir superándome. Mi principal objetivo al seguir estudiando es tener un nivel académico en mi dominio del segundo idioma Inglés"* [He motivates me to do things by myself and to overcome difficulties. My main goal now to justify why I am still studying is to acquire an academic proficiency in English, my second language].

Nevertheless, Copo considered that her broker refusal of helping her was supportive of her obligation to learn English: *"No. Porque él cree que es mi obligación aprender el Inglés y que debo intentarlo"* [No. He thinks that it's my task (obligation) to learn English and I must try to do so].

### c. Acculturation Processes

Having in mind the acculturation framework elaborated above, we tried to explore participants' perception on what they think have changed since they are in the U.S. while they are helped by brokers. In general, the notable change was to find into the betterment of language (English), into their way of thinking: they are more aware of the necessity of learning English and more confident. Sopas was aware of the change in her life:

*"Considero muy valioso tener a mi esposo ayudándome con el idioma Ingles, ya que si no fuese así, me resultaría muy difícil adaptarme. La diferencia entre mi estilo de vida anterior del actual es que me hubiese gustado estudiar más Inglés antes de venir a vivir en Estado Unidos"* [I that benefiting of my husband's help in English is valuable. If not, it would be difficult for me to adapt (to the new culture). The difference between my previous and actual life style consists of this: I would have loved to learn more English before moving to live in the U.S.]

However, Pamiche did not notice any change in her life: "*En realidad no ha cambiado mi vida, solo me ha servido de apoyo cuando he tenido necesidad de traducir algo.*" [My life did not really change. It just helped me when I needed to translate something].

Whether or not our participants have ever guessed the meaning of what their interlocutors communicate, their answers were generally guided by the cognates, the phonology system, the gestures and facial expressions (referring to the Total Physical Response method), and by the context. This implies a little bit of guessing and the existence of the same gestures or facial expressions in both cultures.

Furthermore, participants accepted that they learned slang language, how to write essays, important cultural aspects of American culture, how the American educational system works. Maria added: *"aprendí nuevas reglas de tránsito que no conocía"* [I learned new transit rules I did not know before]. In a similar tone, Lom assents: *"Aprendí expresiones sociales que no te enseñan en un libro. Además, aprendí algunas de los festejos y fiestas que celebran en este país y que en mi país de origen no son comunes"* [I learned some social expressions that you cannot find in the book. Furthermore, I learned about celebrations that are not common in my country].

In order to evaluate their acculturation levels, our participants were asked to answer two questions adapted from Berry et al. (1988). In the following table, we reproduce their answers:

**Table 02: Levels of participants' acculturation processes**

| | *Q1: Is it important to maintain ethnic roots distinctiveness?* | *Q2: Are you willing to enter into contact with other ethnic groups (mainly from U.S.)?* | *Observation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pau** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |
| **Mista** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |
| **Pamiche** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |
| **Metos** | No | Yes | Assimilation |
| **Sopas** | Yes | No | Separation |
| **Copo** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |
| **Maria** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |
| **Lom** | Yes | Yes | Integration, acculturation |

According to the Berry et al.'s (1988) theory, the two answers combined illustrated the cultural profile the participant is going through or is willing to be in a near future. In order words, there are four possible scenarios. If the answer of Q1 is YES and Q2 is YES, the cultural profile that defines this person is integration or the Newman's (1973) acculturation (cultural pluralism). When Q1 is NO and Q2 is YES, the person tends to cultural assimilation. Cultural separation happens when the answer to the Q1 is YES but the Q2 is NO.

However, if the answers of both questions are NO, this illustrates the marginalization process. Most of our participants tend to integration while they were feeling isolated, loneliness, frustrated, and insecure when they first arrived in the U.S. One participant is being assimilated, and another adopted the cultural separation.

This intriguing situation obliged us to inquire more explanations. While in general participants recognized the importance of keeping their own cultural roots distinctiveness and contacting other cultures to learn many things from, Metos was categorical: *"No es muy importante, porque lo principal es estar felices y no es necesario algo más"* [It is not too important, because the principal thing is to be happy and nothing else]. Maybe Metos' answer to the Q2 explains better her aversion to her native ethnical roots: *"Si, porque deseo aprender a comunicarme y entender el idioma"* [Yes, (it is important) because I need to learn speaking in and understanding the language (English)].

However, Sopas identified herself to her native ethnic roots while refusing to enter into contact with persons from other cultures:

*"Si, es importante para mi mantener mis raíces culturales, ya que quiero que mis hijos no las pierdan en esta nueva cultura. Una muestra es que mis hijos hablan 100% Español y también aprenden diario Inglés – En realidad no tengo y no he desarrollado amistad con personas de 100% cultura americana, ya que me he desarrollado un grupo hispano"*. [Yes, it is important for me to maintain my cultural root and identity; because I don't want my children loose it in favor of this new culture. A proof of it is that my children speak 100% Spanish, but they daily learn English – I really don't have, I did make friends with 100% people from American culture; yet, I have made up a Hispanic group of friends].

Sopas' attitude might have a reason intrinsically related to her linguistic competences. Indeed, she was disappointed at her arrival to the U.S. The very Basic English she learned in Mexico did not help her at all when trying to communicate with people from other countries (and different accents) in the United States. This may have been the reason of her withdrawal from willing enter into contact with people linguistically and culturally diverse.

### d.  General Perceptions and Opinions

On a general consideration of LB practices, we asked them if it was good for them and for their brokers. In general, their opinions supported the idea of either a temporal practice (principally when they just arrived at the U.S.) that fosters learning English in order to stop relying on brokers, or a reciprocal learning; the broker learned too. María stated: *"Pienso que es de mucha utilidad mientras no me sepa valer por mí misma. Pero no debe convertirse en una dependencia, porque de lo contrario, nunca me voy a ver en la necesidad de enfrentar los retos por mí misma"* [I think it is very important as long as I cannot valorate myself. But it should not be dependence, if not I will never be able to face challenges by myself].

Likewise, Mista was categorical: *"No es bueno ser dependientes de alguien, ni del esposo ni de los hijos (…)"*. [It is not a good idea to rely on someone, neither husband nor children (…)].

Accordingly, participants generally underlined the possibility of recommending the LB experience to others under the condition mentioned above: temporal service, help for the family, getting acquaintance with the new language, open-windows to other cultures, and fostering second language learning. Metos pointed out the negative side too: *"Si y no, porque quizás esforzamos mucho a nuestros hijos y no le damos tiempo o pautas para que ellos aprendan"* [Yes and no, because we might ask too much to our children and they may be cut of time to learn].

Invited to (positively or negatively) evaluate the impact of LB on cultural adaptation to American mainstream culture, participants focused more on positive effects. As a temporal, introductory stage, LB fosters learning of English, independence and it fasts cultural integration. In a balanced evaluation perspective Metos added: *"Depende de cómo lo tomes; lo puedes tomar como un medio de ayuda y aprender el idioma, o bien estancarte y quedarte en tu zona de confort y no aprender ni superarte"* [It depends on how you take it: you can consider it as an helpfull way of learning a language, or you can be stuck in your comfort zone not willing to overcome obstacles].

Conversely, Sopas warned about the negative impact of LB: *"Creo que el impacto es más negative, ya que te vuelves dependiente de una tercera persona"* [I think the impat is more negative (than positive), because you rely to another person]. Behind this negative warning, we should look back on the relation that may exist between Sopas' cultural profile as shown in the table 02 (separation) and the non-dependence as a result of LB. Our participant body positively evaluates this non-reliance, though.

Finally, what did participants learn from this experience? Pau learned to be more independent:

*(…) hasta que mi hijo dijo: hasta aquí llegué, ya te enseñé cuando no sabías nada. Ahora eres tú la que de hoy en adelante aprendes, y eso también ha sido muy bueno porque cada vez necesito menos de un traductor"* [(…) until my son told me: I have gotten you until here, I taught you when you did not know anything. From now on you are in charge of your own learning. This is a good thing because I need less translators now]

Metos felt empowered by LB: *"Al igual que ella aprendió, yo puedo también aprender"* [Because she learned, I can learn too]. LB was considered as a service (help), and a cultural catalyzer. As a consequence, Pamiche said that parents should be grateful. Furthermore, LB foster independency; it is challenging, Copo said: *"Aprender y jugar el mismo papel de ellos cuando otra persona lo necesite"* [Learn and play the same role than them when others need it (LB)]. Maria's lessons are oriented toward autonomy: *"Me doy cuenta que debo aprender el idioma para valerme por mi misma y para no quedarme aislada de la comunicación con ellos (los hijos) mismos y con la sociedad en la que me desenvuelva"* [I realized that i have to learn the language (English) to valorize myself, so that I will not be isolated from communicating with them (children) and with the community I live in].

Three participants (Pau, Metos, and Maria) curiously reported the same attitude from their 11 to 13 years old children brokers. While shopping at supermarkets, brokers are close to them. However, when they walk through the cashiers, the brokers either disappear or take their distance from their parents; they observe everything from distance. The interpretation they made of their children's attitude follows the same orientation toward the autonomy:  parents should learn to be independent and negotiate their own world.

Comparative data analysis of the narratives suggests that LB practices were in general positively evaluated.  It results that, according to our participants' social profile, this positive view is based on the transitory character of LB. Culturally the positive conception of LB is reflected on the acculturation process they are going through. Most of the participants are oriented or self-rated into the integration or pluralism acculturation. When different acculturation processes (assimilation and separation) were visible, it was to just witness the impact of LB on these processes, as well. Initially then they arrived to the U.S. they probably were not at those cultural acculturation levels.

Another common trait between participants consisted of the precaution they take to value LB: they recognized the negative impact that LB may have. However, when precautionary measures are taken to avoid the negative, they are likely to recommend their own LB experiences.

## 6.  *Conclusions and Recommendations*

Consistent with previous investigations, this research confirms earlier findings on language brokering as practiced by children. Participants' beliefs about LB meet the Orellana's (2009) perspectives: it is a help for the family.

Parents and children are reciprocally benefited: children's cognitive development and academic achievement are being more accelerated than for their peers without brokering experience (Buriel et al, 1998). On the other hand, parents are making their little steps toward English language learning.

Ironically, even when parents and children have the same length of time since they immigrate into the U.S., the latter always end to quickly developing English proficiency so that they can help their relatives. Likewise, they are the first to be exposed to the host culture (Acoach & Webb, 2004). Thus, they become doubly responsible of introducing their parents into a new culture through the language. Even though brokers are aware of the necessity of functioning in a bicultural setting, it is not too obvious for their parents who constantly need help.

The relationship between LB practices and parents' acculturation processes follows the logic expressed above. Evidently, research participants' thoughts are a clear design of how acculturation processes are affected. This impact can be considered as actual, i.e. the situation they are experiencing at this moment, or futuristic, i.e.as they intend to be in a near future or as they wish to be. At least, there are evidences of their initial cultural or linguistic after their arrival into the U.S. Isolation, frustration, fear, loneliness, out of the real word, intimidation, and insecurity (lack of self-esteem or self-confidence) are all, at some extent, synonyms or better said the effects of marginalization and separation as cultural processes. Table 02 above is a clear illustration of the impact on brokers' parents.

Coming to think of the negative and positive views of LB, it is important to rely on the objective of this research: parental acculturation processes. Unlike researches conducted by practitioners of clinical psychology, which outcomes are negative for the child broker, this study takes into consideration the result of LB. The image that best illustrates these practices is of a bridge on the borderlands. Brokers are considered as bridges allowing, facilitating people (parents) to move from one side to another and vice-versa. The two sides represent the two languages or the two cultures. Nowadays in a globalized lens, it is nonsense to think of a people living in their own ivory tower. So, the same way we may positively appreciate technologies today, we may do so for LB practices too. Both are facilitators, or connectors between two worlds. As testified in this research, the advantage of LB consists of challenging parents to finally be able to 'survive', to negotiate the world on their own, while in globalization technology alienates the users.

Accordingly, the community of practice approach helps better understanding of the positive appreciation of LB. In fact communities of practice (CoP) are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). In higher education, CoP is known as a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) (Cox, 2013). From CoPs or FLC perspective LB is an important strategy smoothing new immigrant parents' process of becoming cultural insiders of American host culture. This is a move from cultural periphery (separation or marginalization) toward the center of host culture (integration or assimilation) while strengthening their heritage culture roots (integration).

Moreover, as a transitional familial service (by necessity), LB fosters parental autonomy, being this picture an insightful setting for a better application of brokering. Thus, some educational implications must be drawn from this practice. First of all, if schools in South Texas do not consider the possibility of instructing parents of immigrants' brokers in English, it would be the best moment to do so. Because LB was mentioned in scholar contexts and parents were anxious to follow up the education of their children, schools should promote their instruction to foster their involvement in students' education. Here is where social workers for immigrants should advocate for them on the behalf of their children. Not doing so is supporting that they be left behind.

Furthermore, at the time which schools decide to play the role of community leaders, we consider that they must make efforts to best implement strong models of bilingual education by guaranteeing instructor training (García, 2005) to teach adults from diverse cultural background. We think of strengthening bilingualism because these parents are not ready to give up their cultural identity and be assimilated (findings above are very eloquent). And yet, the aim of bilingualism is to develop linguistic proficiency in two languages and to foster biculturalism. Thus, "bilingual is better" (Flores & Soto, 2012).

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