
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Orozco-Jutorán, Mariana; Vargas-Urpí, Mireia. «Children and teenagers acting as language brokers : the perception of teachers at secondary schools». *Across Languages and Cultures*, 2022. DOI 10.1556/084.2022.00134

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/258313>

under the terms of the  **CC BY** COPYRIGHT license

This is a post-print version of the following article: Orozco-Jutorán, Mariana; Vargas-Urpí, Mireia (2022). Children and teenagers acting as language brokers: the perception of teachers at secondary schools. *Across languages and cultures*. <https://doi.org/10.1556/084.2022.00134>

Children and teenagers acting as language brokers: the perception of teachers at secondary schools

Mariana Orozco Jutorán* (orcid: 0000-0003-4044-6675) and Mireia Vargas-Urpí (orcid: 0000-0001-6302-581X)

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Department of Translation and Interpreting and East Asian Studies

K Building – UAB Campus

08193 Bellaterra – Barcelona (Spain)

mariana.orozco@uab.cat , mireia.vargas@uab.cat

Keywords: child language brokering, non-professional interpreting, interpreting and migration

ABSTRACT

Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS) usually consider all types and genres of translation and interpreting by adults who perform either as professionals or amateurs. However, under the current migration reality, there are many children and teenagers who act as translators and interpreters for their parents and (extended) families or communities, without any training or acknowledgement. They are called Child Language Brokers, to clearly state the difference with professional, adult translators and interpreters, and this article seeks to shed some light on their reality, which has received little, if any, attention from scholars in the translation, interpreting and interculturality fields. After a

* Corresponding autor. Email: mariana.orozco@uab.cat

general overview of the existing literature, the design and results of a study conducted in Barcelona (Spain) in 2019 and 2020 are shared. The aim of the study is to describe the existing reality with a view to contributing to mapping the actual situation of child language brokering around the world.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA), the total number of international migrants in mid-2019 was 271.6 million, corresponding to 3.5% of the total world population. In Spain, the international migrant stock in 2019 was 13.1% of the total population, a relatively similar proportion to other European countries (e.g. 12.8% in France, 15.7% in Germany or 10.4% in Italy)¹. Forty per cent of all permanent migration to OECD countries is family migration, that is, married couples or family members admitted together with the principal migrant². In this respect, children and teenagers make up an important group to consider in worldwide migration flows. To give an example of the number of children and teenagers involved in permanent migration, just in Spain, in the academic year 2018-2019, a total of 648,056 foreign children were enrolled in pre-school, primary or compulsory secondary education.³ This number excludes those born in Spain in families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Schooling and linguistic immersion help children learn the official language(s) of the country where they are living faster than their parents might do. For this reason, parents and other relatives with limited language proficiency in local languages often rely on children and teenagers to translate and interpret for them when they need to communicate with service providers or understand any kind of written information, as clearly depicted in Orellana's (2009) ethnographic work. One of the terms used by researchers to refer to this phenomenon is "child language brokering" (CLB), defined as follows:

Child language brokering (CLB) denotes interpreting and translation activities carried out by bilingual children who mediate linguistically and culturally in formal and informal contexts and domains for their family and friends as well as members of the linguistic community to which they belong (Antonini 2015:88).

The term "language brokering" was introduced by Tse (1995) and seeks to emphasize the fact that language brokers, unlike professional interpreters and translators, "influence the messages they convey and may act as a decision maker for one or both parties" (Tse

1995:180). Previous research on CLB seems to confirm this influence of children when they are asked to interpret: they may change statements to maintain social equilibrium and to avoid arguments or discrepancies among primary participants, to accommodate them to cultural expectations or to hide bad news concerning themselves, such as, for instance, bad school reports (cf. Cline et al. 2010).

CLB is also related to “natural interpreting”, which in turns derives from the notion of “natural translation”, first coined by Harris (1976: 5) and defined as “the translation done by bilinguals in everyday circumstances and without special training for it”. Harris, through the blogsite ‘Unprofessional translation’⁴ has long advocated that Translation Studies should primarily draw on data from natural translation instances, rather than from other professional or semiprofessional branches of translation (Harris & Sherwood, 1978). Research into public service interpreting has plenty of examples of studies focusing on language brokering by adults, also referred to as “*ad hoc* interpreting” or “non-professional interpreting” (for a more detailed discussion of the terms used to describe language brokering see Antonini et al. 2017). For instance, Pöchhacker and Kadric (2014) explored how a hospital cleaner became a spontaneous *ad hoc* interpreter when she was the only one that spoke a patient’s language in a hospital.

Children often help parents with everyday bureaucracy, such as filling in forms (Pryor 2017), but child language brokers are also substantially engaged in work activities which have powerful consequences for the economic welfare of their families (cf. Buriel et al. 1998; Hall & Sham 2007). This idea is also sustained by Orellana (2009:124), who points out that children’s translation activities have a “measurable economic impact”, since “child language brokers help make it possible for their parents to live, eat, shop and otherwise sustain themselves as workers, citizens and consumers in the host society”. Therefore, these children and teenagers not only make a significant contribution to the economic and social life of their families, but also to the institutions that allow this practice (Hall & Sham 2007; Antonini 2015).

Regarding the impact on children and young family members who perform CLB, studies show contradictory findings: some suggest that it can cause stress and be a burden on some children and teenagers, while others suggest that the language brokers can find it enjoyable or rewarding (cf. Antonini 2010; Cline et al. 2010, for an exhaustive review on this topic). For instance, Hall & Sham (2007), in a study conducted in England, found that language brokerage by Chinese children sometimes resulted in anxiety, especially when they

had to face difficult situations. Orellana (2009:119) also concluded that CLB has both “positive and negative implications for youth learning and development”.

In this context, the MIRAS⁵ research group decided to launch a research project to contribute to making CLB more visible. From among all the different settings where CLB takes place, MIRAS research focuses on public services, that is, on school, health and social services settings. This study is a part of a wider set of two research projects, including the creation of secondary school teaching materials, a video game aimed at teenagers and videos to raise social awareness on the subject that are currently undergoing.⁶

PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING

According to Antonini’s (2010; 2015) and Orellana’s (2017) reviews of the state of the art in CLB, while research on CLB has been growing, studies have mainly taken place in the USA, with research focusing on CLB performed by members of Hispanic communities (see, for instance, literature reviews by Morales & Hanson 2005; Valdés 2003). In Europe, there are some groups and scholars researching CLB, but the number of studies is still comparatively low. In the UK, there are pioneering studies led by members of the Thomas Coram Research Unit⁷ (Cline et al. 2010; Crafter, Cline & Prokopiou 2017) and in Italy there is a noteworthy project, InMedIO PUER, based on qualitative research (Antonini 2010, 2017; Cirillo, Torresi & Valentini 2010; Cirillo 2017; Torresi 2017). In Spain, the most outstanding contributions on this topic are García-Sánchez (2010) and Pena-Díaz (2019), while Foulquié-Rubio (2015) partially addresses this issue.

All these authors agree that there is a need for sounder, more rigorous research on this understudied topic, which is multifaceted and includes many different disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, translation and interpreting studies, education, language acquisition and bilingualism.

In this context, the study presented in the following sections surveys CLB among the public secondary school teachers in Barcelona (Spain). These schools, as many others in Spain, endure a lack of language support when in need of interpreting to foreign languages, i.e. other than Spanish or Catalan. The aim of this survey is to contribute to the description and mapping of CLB around the world. Although we could have replicated some of the existing studies that have been mentioned, we found them problematic for various reasons. Some of them took too much time to conduct, and the researchers were able to get answers because they were paying the subjects. In our case, we wanted to conduct a shorter type of survey, that could be easily answered electronically, which would also make it easier to be

replicated by anybody worldwide. Other studies were too focused in specific items, such as emotional impact or academic performance, and we wanted to develop a tool to provide a general description of the phenomenon.

The research methodology and the questionnaire used are described in detail to favour the replicability of the study in other services (such as health and social services) and also other regions and countries, with the aim of obtaining comparable data worldwide. This mapping would give us a picture of what is happening and would also help increase the visibility and recognition of the importance of CLB, by measuring its impact in certain domains such as education, health and social services. This could also help to make authorities aware that they are allowing children and teenagers to carry out, unknowingly and for free, the jobs of professional translators and interpreters.

DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

The population consisted of the secondary schools of the province of Barcelona (Spain). This province occupies nearly 8,000 square kilometres, includes 311 cities and towns and has a total of 394 public secondary schools, with 129,620 students of whom 17,845 (13.8%) are foreign⁸. It is the second most populated province in Spain, with 5,743,402 inhabitants⁹, of whom 883,558¹⁰ (15.3%) are legally registered migrants, which also makes it the second province most populated by migrants in Spain, after the province of Madrid. Therefore, it is a very appropriate place to conduct the research, since the educational community regularly receives new migrant students whose families need interpreting to communicate, and thus CLB is a very common phenomenon.

In this province, schools are classified according to their needs, taking into account factors such as the socioeconomic situation of the families whose children attend the schools, and 116 schools out of the total 394 existing public schools are considered of “maximum complexity” (83) and “high complexity” (34). These two types of schools usually have an important proportion of students from migrant families, and this was the reason for selecting them as the sample of the study, since it was most probable that CLB took place in these schools and also the teachers would be more motivated to answer the questionnaire.

The Department of Education was contacted to obtain the e-mails of the head teachers of all these 116 secondary education schools in the province of Barcelona and they were asked to distribute the link among the teachers in their school. The data collection period was one month, from 20 January to 28 February 2020. A total of 60 informants out of the total of

116, all of them public secondary school teachers from the schools targeted, completed the questionnaires, so our sample includes 51% of the population. Most of them (41 out of 60) were from the regions Baix Llobregat and Barcelonès, where 71 of the 116 maximum and high complexity centres are concentrated. This number of answers (60) seems consistent with other studies with similar scopes, such as the one by Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou (2014), who followed a similar survey approach in England – including the London area and the metropolitan areas across all the English regions and counties in the East Midlands and the South East - and received 63 answers. However, we cannot compare the total percentage of answers received, since in the study by Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou (2014) there is no mention of the amount of total questionnaires sent, only of the ones answered.

The data obtained and the results discussed in the following sections thus come from a sample that represents 51.7% of the total population of high and maximum complexity secondary schools in the province of Barcelona. The original language of the questionnaire was Catalan, which is an official language in all the schools where the questionnaires were distributed, and the English translations of the questions in the following section are the authors'.

Naturally, it would be very interesting to replicate the study in the whole of Spain or Europe, for instance, to see to what extent the results obtained are corroborated. As already mentioned, one of the aims of this article is to share the research methodology and the questionnaire used in order to favour the replicability of the study and thus obtain comparable data worldwide.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONALIZATION

The specific objective of the study was to provide objective, empirical information about the extent and characteristics of CLB among the major migrated communities in the education community in the province of Barcelona. With this aim, a wide range of aspects - or dependent variables - were considered and operationalized into specific questions:¹¹

Scope and Frequency of CLB in Schools.

One of the most important aspects to map CLB is to describe the frequency and incidence of CLB in the community, that is, the answer to the question “When and with what frequency does it happen?”. In order to retrieve data about this dependent variable, five questions are

included in the questionnaire. The first one seeks to know in which situations the CLB takes place:

1. When you need to communicate with a student's parents or legal guardians and they have limited competency in Spanish or Catalan, what do you do?
 - a. I talk to the management of the centre to hire a professional interpreter or mediator
 - b. I search for another student that speaks the same language as the parents or legal guardians
 - c. I ask the student to interpret during the parent-teacher conference
 - d. I ask the parents to come with someone who speaks both their language and Catalan or Spanish
 - e. Other... (please specify)

In this question, we wanted to limit the number of responses to just one, which would be the most frequent solution, even though we acknowledge there might be cases in which a teacher might need to choose more than one option.

The second question seeks to contrast or reinforce the information obtained in the first question, by asking about the frequency of CLB in the school. Two additional questions (2.1 and 2.2) are added to clarify what "regular" and "occasional" means to respondents in case they tick these boxes.

2. Does Child Language Brokering in your school occur regularly or occasionally?
 - Regularly
 - Occasionally
 - Never
 - N/A

2.1. If you answered "regularly", how often does it take place in a month?

- 1-3 times a month
- 4-6 times a month
- 7-9 times a month
- 10 or more times a month

2.2. If you answered "occasionally", how often does it take place per academic year?

- 1-3 times per academic year
- 4-6 times per academic year

- 7-9 times per academic year

The third question in this first block seeks to explore possible differences in the frequency of CLB among those migrant communities in the study that were considered the most frequent in Barcelona province. Some of these migrant communities include several nationalities with common linguistic and cultural traits, such as the Maghrebi, which includes Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania Tunisia and Libya and these have been grouped in order to make it easier for the teachers to answer the questions. Other communities, by contrast, include only one nationality, such as China and Pakistan that have unique linguistic and cultural traits.

- Rank the following migrant communities according to CLB frequency (1 = the most frequent, 5 = the least frequent)
 - Maghrebi
 - Sub-Saharan
 - Pakistani
 - Chinese
 - Other (please specify)

An open-ended question is added here in case any informants want to provide the reasons for the higher frequency of CLB in a given migrant group:

- For what reason do you think there are communities in which CLB is more frequent?

Finally, question no. 5 in the questionnaire seeks to complement the answer provided in question no. 1 by gathering information on whether CLB is mainly used as an emergency solution when a teacher needs to communicate with parents urgently, or whether it is also used as a regular solution for parent-teacher interviews that can be planned in advance (for which a professional interpreter could be contacted).

- CLB occurs in... (only one option per row can be selected)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	N/A
Situations that have been planned in advance (e.g. parent-teacher interview)	○	○	○	○	○

Unforeseen situations
 (urgent need to communicate
 with parents, exceptional
 information that needs to be
 communicated, interviews
 where an interpreter was not
 deemed necessary)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Gender Perspective

CLB is a form of care-work and care-work, in general, is often take on by women. Thus, we wanted to explore whether this was also the case in such early stages as CLB and in this case to find out, if possible, the reasons for any possible gender imbalance.

To approach this issue, the following question was designed, asking about the salience of boys or girls depending on the migrant community to which they belong. It was decided to ask about each group separately to see whether marked gender differences in any particular migrant community could be related to the traditional roles of men and women in that particular culture.

6. In CLB situations, who is usually the language broker? (mark only one option per row)

	More often boys	More often girls	Boys and girls equally	N/A
Maghrebi	○	○	○	○
Sub-Saharan	○	○	○	○
Pakistani	○	○	○	○
Chinese	○	○	○	○
Other groups (please specify)	○	○	○	○

Age

In order to have a better description of who performs language brokering in schools, question seven asks about the most common ages of child language brokers, which is very useful information regarding child development and maturity.

7. What is the most common age range for the students that perform CLB? More than one option can be marked.
- Less than 10 years old
 - 11-12
 - 13-14
 - 15-16
 - 17-18
 - N/A

Impact on School Performance

Question eight seeks to measure the possible burden of CLB (inside and outside school) and how it might affect school performance, among other aspects. Therefore, the question asks about CLB performed outside the school, as happens, for instance, when children mediate for their parents with social services or healthcare.

8. How often do students skip classes to perform CLB tasks? (e.g. to interpret for their parents in an interview at school or outside the school, when their parents need to visit social services or go to the doctor, for instance)
- Regularly
 - Occasionally
 - Seldom
 - Never
 - N/A

As in question no. 2, follow-up questions are added here to obtain a more accurate idea about what “regularly” (1-3 times a month, 4-6 times a month, 7-9 times a month, 10 or more times a month) and “occasionally” (1-3 times per academic year, 4-6 times per academic year, 7-9 times per academic year) mean. The questionnaire also provides an open space to specify the answer in case “rarely” is marked.

Emotional Impact

Previous research focuses especially on the emotional impact of CLB in the children or teenagers who act as language brokers and who can show stress, distress, increased sense of responsibility and adultification (House, Umberson & Landis 1988; Jones & Trickett 2005; Jones, Trickett & Birman 2012; Shen, Tilton & Kim 2017; Titzmann 2012; Weisskirch 2006, 2007, 2017), although positive effects have also been identified, as some find this activity rewarding (Orellana, 2009). Therefore, a set of three questions was designed to identify the most commonly perceived emotional effects of CLB. The first question asks about the feelings the teacher might perceive in students while performing CLB.

9. How do you think young students feel while they interpret? (more than one answer can be chosen)

- Stressed, nervous
- Quiet / calm
- Happy
- Uninterested
- Angry
- N/A
- Other (please specify)

The different possible answers provided were based on previous studies. However, the possibility of answering “other” was also included so that teachers could add other emotions that had not been foreseen. We are aware that emotions are a complex issue that might be better approached with other research approaches and data collection instruments, such as interviews.¹² However, at the same time, the emotional impact is an important aspect of CLB that had to be included in a survey seeking to obtain a general overview of the CLB phenomenon as a first approach to an object of study that should then be complemented with interviews, observation or other qualitative methods.

The second question explores how CLB influences the teacher-student relationship.

10. Do you think that the relationship between students performing CLB and their teachers is influenced by the fact that the student performs CLB tasks?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes

- Never
- N/A

Finally, if respondents marked affirmative answers in the previous question, a supplementary question was designed to explore how this relationship was affected:

11. If you responded affirmatively to the previous question, how would you say the relationship is influenced?

- The relationship is closer than before
- The relationship is more distant than before
- N/A
- Other (please specify)

Other Aspects

In the last section, an optional open-ended question is included, so that teachers can provide supplementary information they might want to share:

12. Would you like to explain your experience with CLB and/or other related issues relevant to this topic?

CREATION AND VALIDATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire Structure and Format

With the aim of creating a questionnaire that could be answered by secondary school teachers who are usually very busy, it was decided to use an online format that could be included in a single e-mail, and that participants would be able to complete in a maximum of 10 minutes, a fact that usually increases the potential replies collected. The platform used to create and distribute the questionnaire was Google Forms.

Formally, the questionnaire is structured in four sections, each with a short title to indicate the central issue being addressed. The first section presents the objectives of the research and contains relevant information regarding general data protection. Respondents are asked to explicitly agree to participate in the research by ticking a box in order to move to the next section.

Section two aims to collect information regarding respondents' profile. Firstly, the region where their secondary education centre is located, since we wanted to see whether CLB had a higher or lower incidence depending on the region, as this could then be related to the proportion of migration population in that specific region or to the availability of resources. This is asked in a question where the participant needs to tick the box corresponding to the region where his/her centre is located. Secondly, the respondent's role in the school: tutor in compulsory secondary education, tutor of the welcoming classroom where migrants are usually placed upon arrival in the centre, tutor in Baccalaureate, tutor in vocational training, head teacher of the school, or any other role. This information is important to be able to contextualize certain answers if needed. This is asked in a question where the participant needs to tick the box corresponding to his/her role in the school and more than one box can be ticked, including "other roles".

Section three includes the 12 questions related to the study's dependent variables, described in detail in section 2 above.

Finally, section four is called "miscellaneous" and encompasses a short text explaining the use that will be made by the MIRAS research group of the data obtained and thanking the participants, in addition to two short questions. The first one asks the participant whether s/he would be happy to answer more questions or do a follow-up interview related to CLB, to which s/he can answer only yes or no. If the answer is "yes", then they are asked to write an e-mail where they can be contacted; and finally, the second question asks whether they would like to receive the results of the study once it is completed and, if so, there is a space to write an e-mail address where the information can be sent.

RESULTS

Scope and Frequency of CLB in Schools.

The responses collected suggest that teachers still tend to use *ad hoc* solutions when they need to communicate with parents with limited language proficiency (LLP), as shown in Figure 1: 49 out of 60 of the teachers (81%) stated that they rely on CLB, either undertaken by the affected child (22 informants), by another student who also speaks the parents' language (12 informants) or by *ad hoc* interpreters, that is, someone the parents who attend the meeting bring with them (15 informants). Only 9 of the 60 informants (15%) affirmed that they tried to contact professional interpreters or mediators when they needed to communicate with parents with LLP.

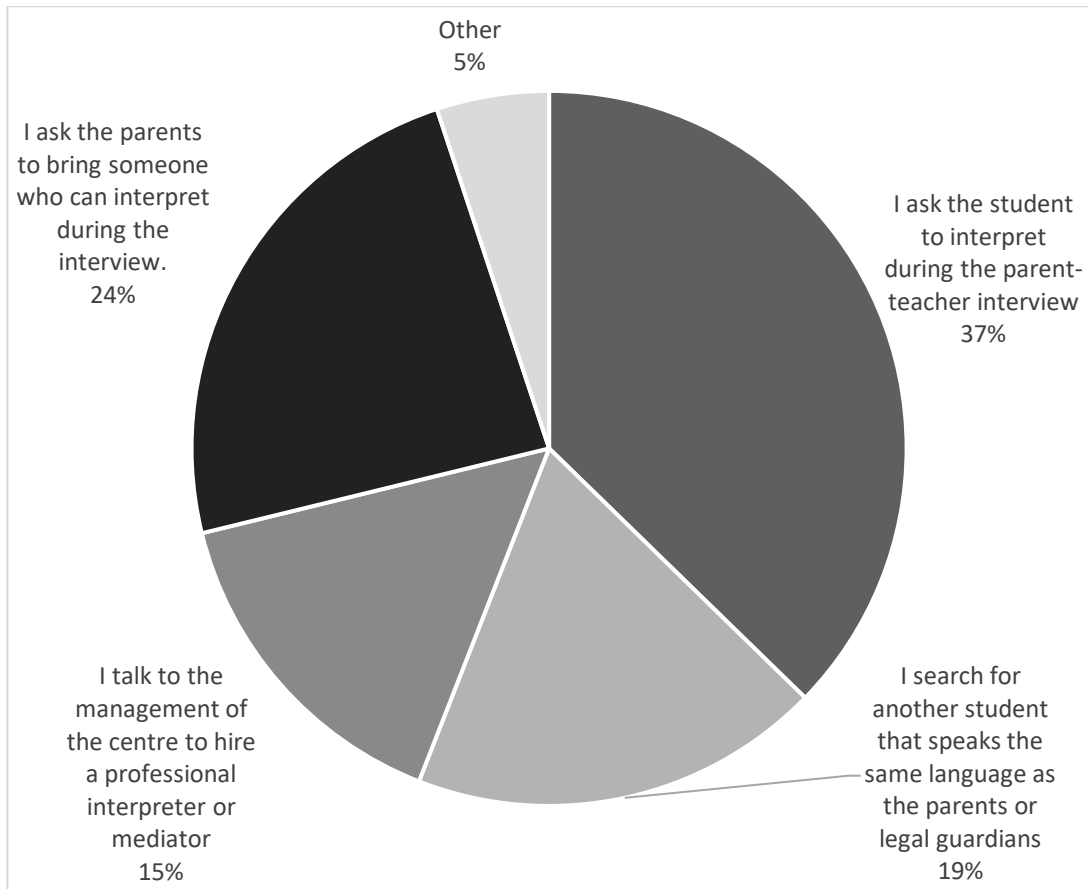


Fig. 1. Answers to question 1, regarding the situations in which CLB takes place.

These results are consistent with what was found in a previous study carried out in Barcelona (Bestué et al. 2012:45) among public service providers, where 78.7% of the respondents affirmed that users with LLP resorted to relatives or friends when dealing with public services. However, in the study by Bestué et al. (2012:45), 60% of the respondents also mentioned that they resorted to professional solutions in some cases (e.g. public service interpreting or intercultural mediation). This leads us to think that it might be interesting to give the participants the option of choosing more than one answer in this question on future occasions.

Figure 2 shows the results regarding the frequency of CLB, where 43 out of the 60 informants (72%) marked CLB as an occasional practice, 11 out of 60 (18%) considered it regular and only 2 (3%) mentioned that it never happened in their school. From among the 11 respondents that marked it as a regular practice, most of them (8 respondents) said that it happens 1-3 times per month. From among the 43 respondents that marked it as an occasional practice, most of them (27 respondents) thought that it only happened 1-3 times per academic

year, while 13 of them marked the 4-6 times per academic year option. These results are more or less in line with what was found in the study by Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou (2014:15). In their case, there was a higher percentage of teachers who stated that CLB happened “often”, 27% (vs. 18 % in our study), and a lower percentage of teachers that affirmed that CLB happened “sometimes”, 60% (vs. 72% in our study). However, adding the figures of the affirmative answers of both studies gives exactly the same result: 97% of respondents considered that CLB happened in their schools.

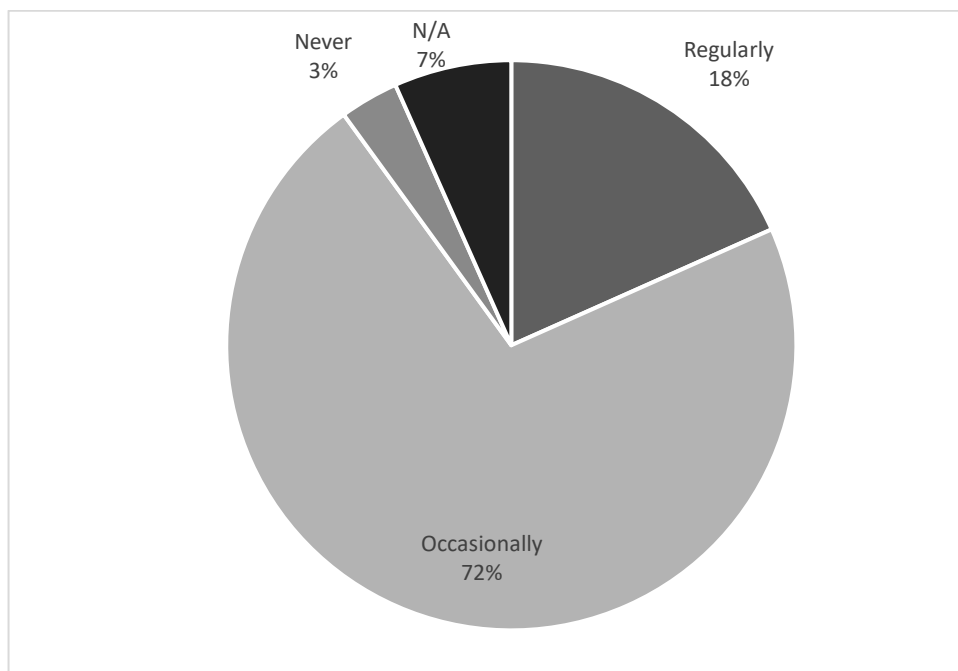


Fig. 2. Answers to question 2, regarding the frequency of CLB in schools

Google Forms offers the option of downloading the answer as an Excel file, where answers from the same informant are distributed in different columns but in a single row. This makes it possible to compare and cross-check answers from different questions. In this specific case, it was interesting to see whether those who regarded CLB as regular were located in the same region. In this respect, from among the 11 respondents who affirmed that CLB was a regular practice in their school, 4 were from Baix Llobregat (which is considered part of Barcelona metropolitan area) and 5 from Barcelonès (a region comprising Barcelona and four of the surrounding cities). These data might suggest a correlation between a higher immigration rate and higher CLB frequency. However, the only questionnaire received from Moianès, a small region located 55 km from Barcelona, also marked CLB as a regular practice, which might be further related to a lack of resources in one of the regions with the

lowest immigration rates in Catalonia. Therefore, more specific or detailed studies would be necessary to be able to establish or discard this correlation.

Regarding question 3, where teachers were asked to rank the communities that most resort to CLB, only communities ranked as the first option were considered, as the first position is the only one that reflects the prominence of a specific group. As shown in Figure 3, Maghrebi and Chinese stand out as the two communities with most CLB practices, this being somehow predictable because they are the first and third largest migrated communities in the province of Barcelona.¹³ From among the five teachers that marked “other”, some of them then specified that they referred to Slavic languages (1), Russian (1) and Georgian (1). The two other answers were left blank.

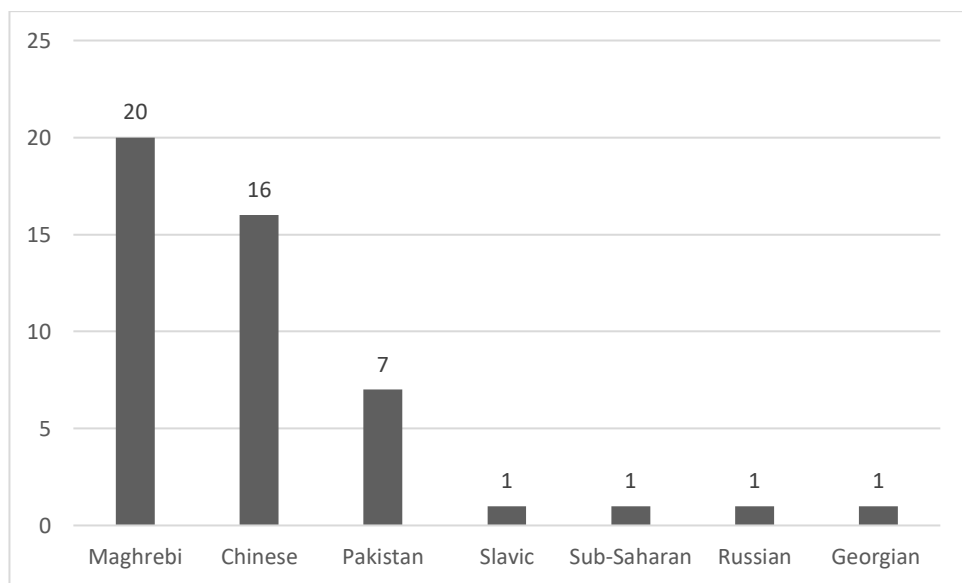


Fig. 3. Answers to question 3, regarding the communities that most often resort to CLB.

The answers to the open-end question (No. 4) regarding the reasons the teachers thought there were communities in which CLB was more frequent were analysed using thematic analysis, and five main topics were identified:

- (a) People from this migrant community do not usually interact with local people (they lack “integration”) (23 informants out of 60, 37%).
- (b) This is the largest migrant community in our area (14 informants out of 60, that is 25%).
- (c) They have a low literacy level (6 out of 60 informants, that is, 10%).
- (d) They have recently arrived (6 informants) and they speak distant languages that do not share a Latin root (6 informants). These two answers together amount to 20%.

- (e) There is a lack of resources to contact professional interpreters for this task (5 out of 60 informants, that is, 8%)

The analysis of these answers to this open-end question yields interesting results, such as the fact that 41 respondents out of 60 (67%) make the members of migrated communities directly responsible for CLB, whilst only 5 (8%) pinpoint the lack of resources from the authorities to facilitate communication with people with LLP.

Finally, Figure 4 shows the answers to question 5, regarding the kind of situations that require CLB in the school environment. The aim of this question was to find out whether CLB was just used as an emergency solution in unforeseen situations, or whether it was also used as a solution in situations that could be planned beforehand. The distribution of responses does not reflect important differences between these two kinds of situations, suggesting that CLB is used almost equally as an emergency solution and as a planned solution. In both cases, the option with more responses is “sometimes”, with 25 answers in planned situations, and 22 answers in unforeseen situations. In second place, 17 respondents marked ‘often’ in planned situations, while 18 did so in unforeseen situations.

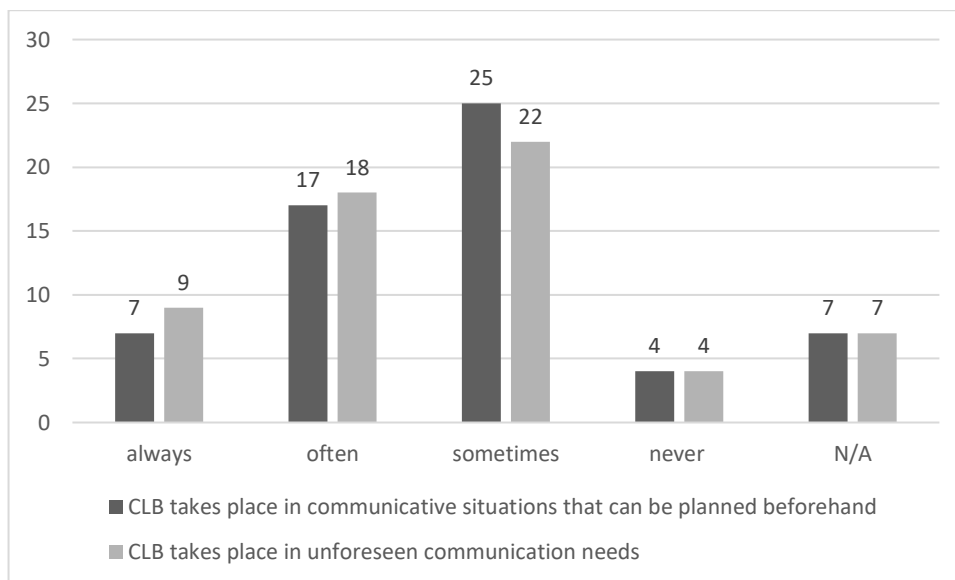


Fig. 4. Answers to question 5, regarding the kind of situations that require CLB.

Gender of the Language Brokers

As can be seen in Figure 5, there seems to be a certain balance in gender distribution between the four communities that were chosen as the object of study. Excluding the “n/a” answers, in all four cases, “equally boys and girls” was the option with the most answers: 16 informants out of 60 (27%), 15 informants (26%), 12 informants (21%) and 13 informants (22%) in each of the four migrant communities. However, in the Maghrebi and Chinese communities, girls

seem to act as language brokers slightly more commonly than boys, while in the Pakistani community boys taking on this role seem to be slightly more frequent than girls.

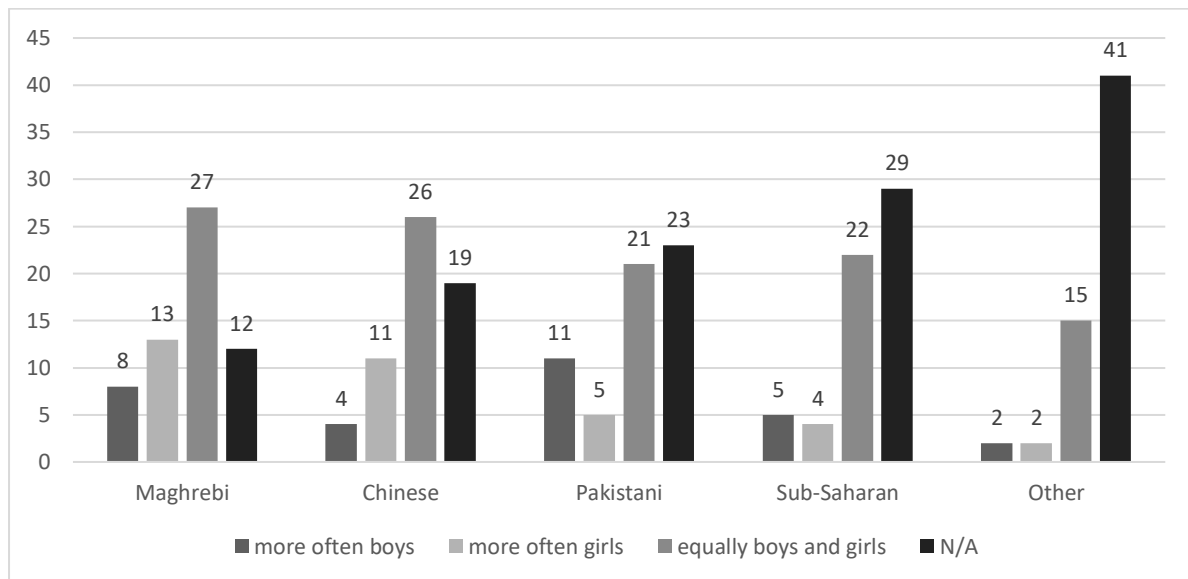


Fig. 5. Answers to question 6, regarding the gender of the language brokers.

Age

Regarding age, as shown in Figure 6, the most salient age group is the 15–16-year-olds, which also coincides with the last years of compulsory secondary education. This result suggests that there might be a tendency to search for older students to liaise with parents when there are communication barriers at school. The second group is 13-14, while 17-18, despite being the oldest age range included, is in third position. This is also related to many students from migrant origin not continuing with post-compulsory education after they are 16 years old. Students who are 11-12 years old and younger are the least frequent language brokers, which is also understandable because the questionnaire was distributed in secondary schools, and students enter secondary education at the age of 12 in Spain.

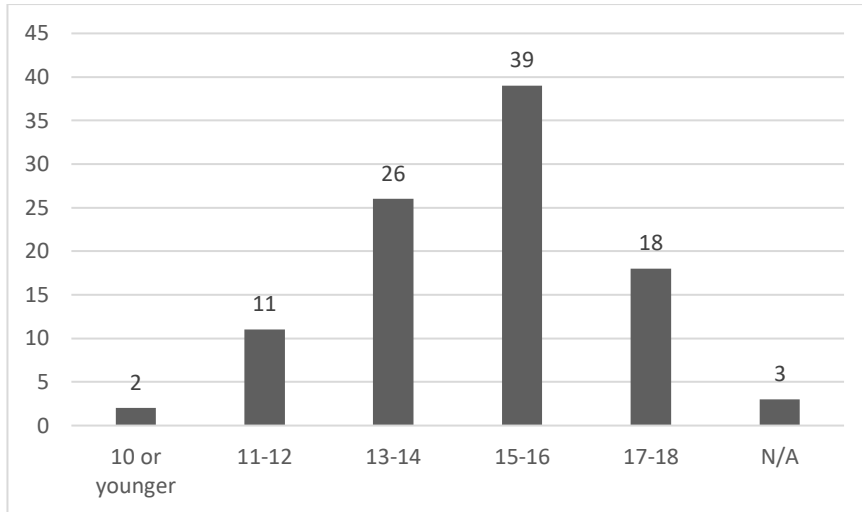


Fig. 6. Answers to question 7, regarding the age of language brokers.

Impact on School Performance

According to teachers' answers, most students who perform CLB have missed attending classes to a greater or lesser extent, since only 12% state that this never happens, as can be seen in Figure 7. However, the results suggest that this mostly happens occasionally (26 informants out of 60) or seldom (20 informants), and only 5 informants consider it "regular".

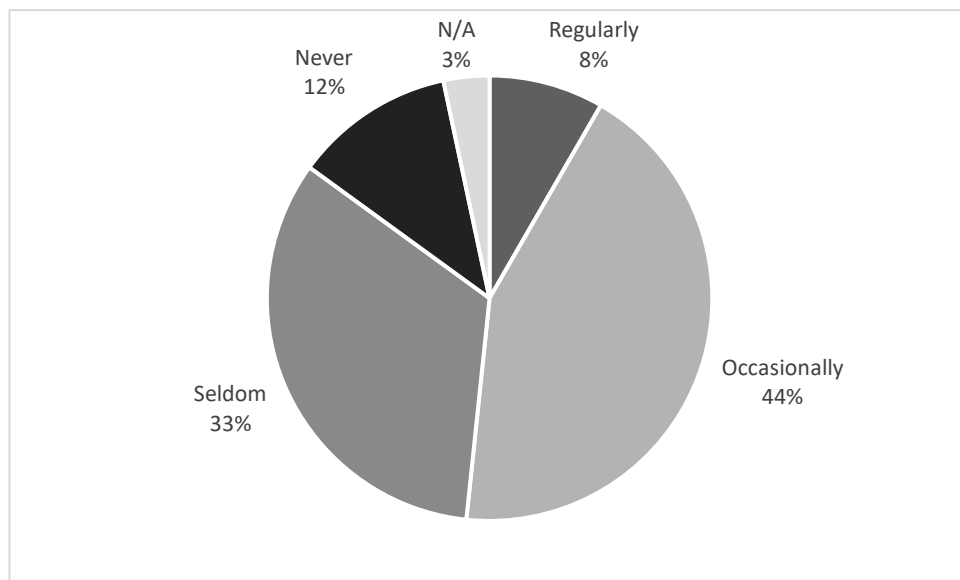


Fig. 7. Answers to question 8, regarding the frequency with what students miss classes to perform CLB tasks.

In the follow-up questions, the 5 respondents that said this happened regularly specified that students might miss classes one to three times a month. From among the 46 respondents that

marked “occasionally” and “seldom”, 31 (67%) indicated a frequency of 1-3 times per academic year, 12 (27%) said it happened 4-6 times a year and 3 (6%), 7-9 times a year, as can be seen in Figure 8.

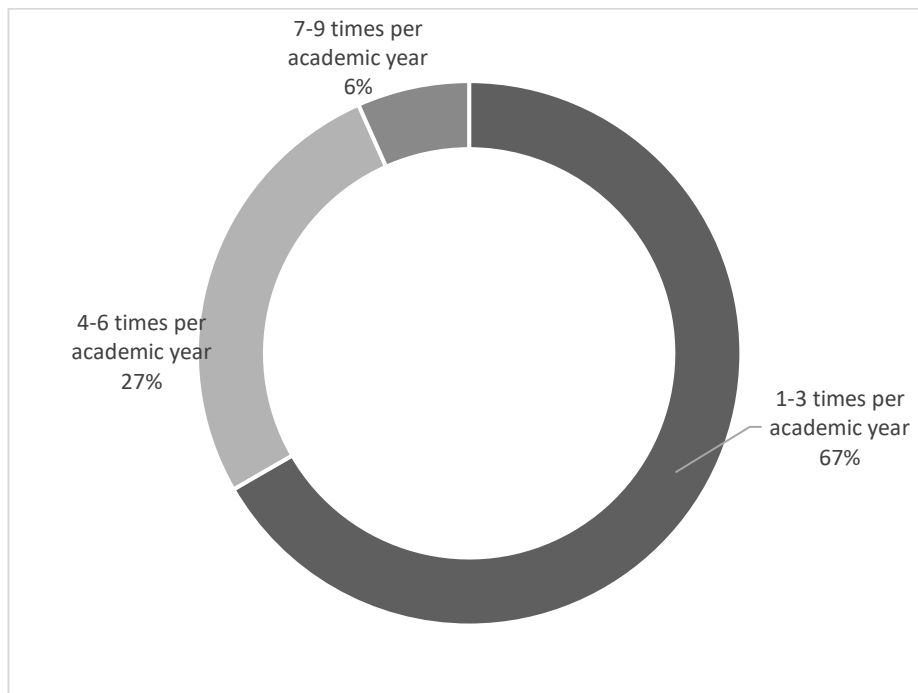


Fig. 8. Answers to follow-up questions of question 8, regarding the frequency of missing class due to CLB tasks when it is occasionally or seldom.

Emotional Impact

The answers to the question regarding the emotional impact of CLB on young people can be seen in Figure 9. Most teachers observed positive feelings: 21 out of 60 (35%) said students were quiet or calm and 18 (30%) perceived them as happy. Negative feelings were also mentioned but in much smaller proportions: 8 informants out of 60 (14%) perceived students as stressed or nervous, 4 (6%) thought students did not show special interest in the task and 2 (4%) saw them as angry.

On the one hand, these perceptions seem to contrast with the findings from Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou (2014:31), where 33% of ex-CLBs found it embarrassing, 42% found it stressful and 21% “felt angry when they had to translate in school”. However, on the other hand, they concur with the findings of Cirillo (2017), where 60% of the respondents declared that they felt happy when translating for their family. The issue of emotional impact of CLB on the brokers needs more detailed studies, especially since there seem to be contradictions among findings by different studies, that could be due, for instance, to the difference between the

perception of the teachers and the perception of the students themselves.

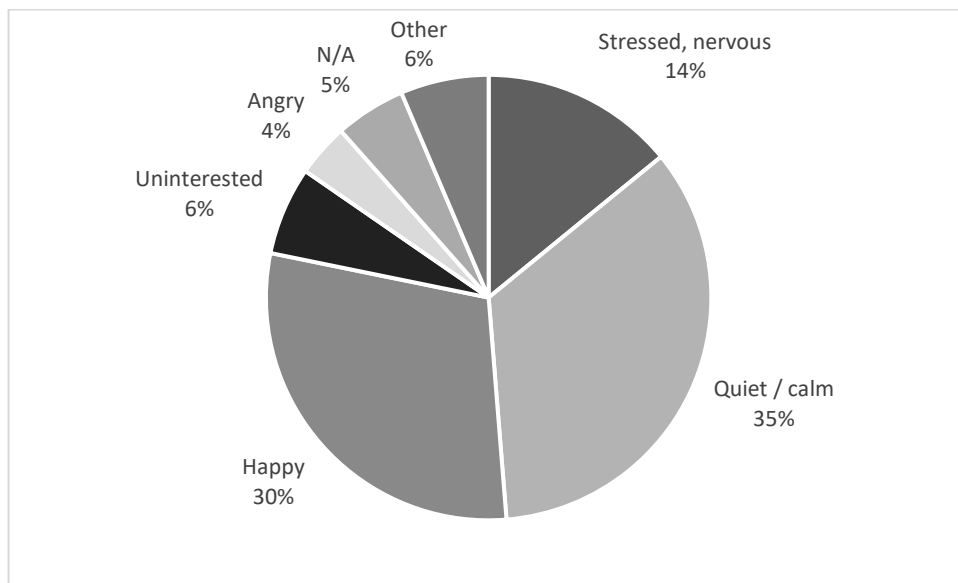


Fig. 9. Answers to question 9, regarding the emotions perceived in language brokers by the teachers.

When asked if they felt that CLB changed the relationship between the teacher and the students who perform CLB, as shown in Figure 10, most respondents felt that this happened sometimes (29 informants out of 60, that is, 48%) or often (16 informants, 27%) and 3 informants (5%) acknowledged that CLB always affected the student-teacher relationship, while only 6 (10%) said this never happened.

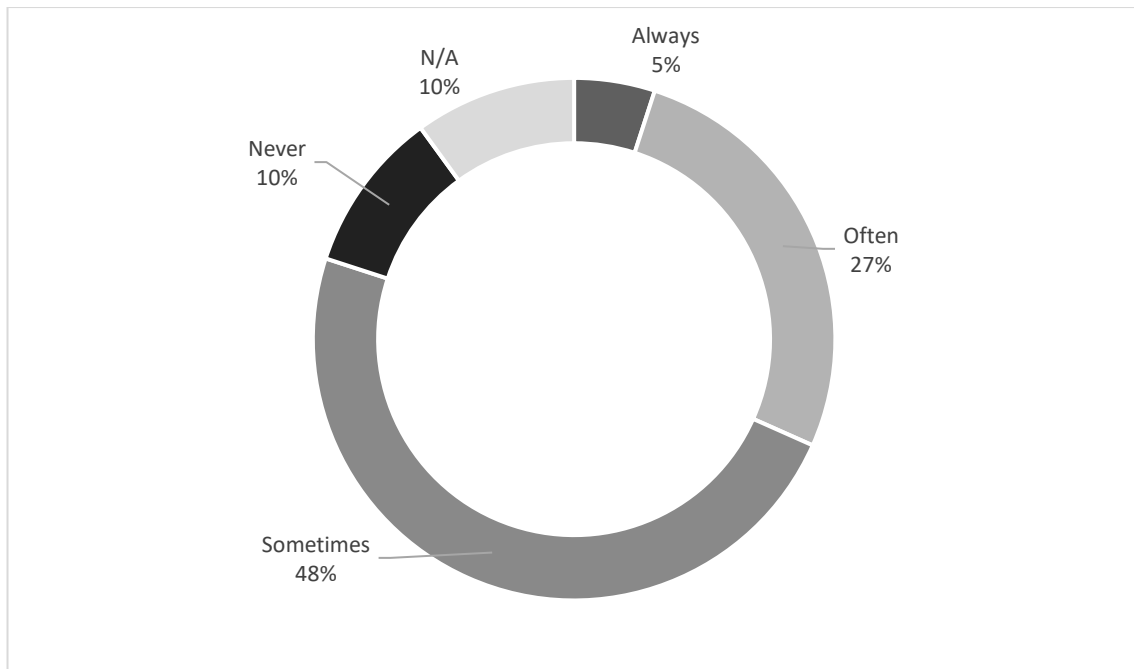


Fig. 10. Answers to question 10, regarding the influence of CLB on the teacher-student relationship.

In question 11, where the teachers were asked how their relationship was affected, 37 out of 60 (62%) considered that their relationship with the students performing CLB was closer, 18 did not answer and 5 teachers marked the “others” answer, while no informant felt that the relationship with the students became more distant due to the CLB performance. However, from among the 5 respondents who indicated “other”, one explained that s/he thought that after acting as CLB students showed unease with the teacher. This was because, after hearing the things that were said in the interviews, they saw the teacher with different eyes, as they became aware of things they probably should not have heard, such as the personal opinion of the teacher regarding their performance, their personality or their behaviour, or some personal questions the teacher asked the parents. This answer raises other questions that it could be interesting to ask on future occasions.

Other Issues

For this last, optional question, which was open to any comments respondents wanted to share, 22 answers out of 60 were received (37%). The answers were analysed using thematic analysis, and four main topics were identified:

- (a) Teachers feel the need for professional interpreters for this task (6 out of 22).

- (b) CLB is perceived as something positive: children like to collaborate when they need to translate for their parents, they feel recognized and are often a role model for their peers (6 out of 22).
- (c) CLB is perceived as a problem (5 out of 22). Three main problems are mentioned: young people deal with problems they should not be aware of; CLB is often performed by the same person (in the family or the classroom) and this generates a certain burn-out feeling; teachers' experience with CLB has been negative (chaotic).
- (d) CLB is untrustworthy (5 out of 22). Teachers do not know whether young language brokers are translating what they are saying, especially when bad news needs to be conveyed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study carried out with a selected sample of public secondary schools in the province of Barcelona yields interesting data regarding the profile of the young language brokers and the extent of CLB practices in school settings.

The typical profile of the young language broker, as shown by the study, is equally male or female, 15-16 years old, and belongs to one of the most frequent migrant communities in the region, Maghrebi or Chinese. The teachers perceive him/her as calm or happy when performing CLB tasks that s/he carries out occasionally, that is, 3-4 times per year, sometimes in an unforeseen way and sometimes in a planned way, missing his/her own classes to perform CLB.

Some of these findings seem to validate the results of other studies, for instance the frequency of CLB in schools is very similar with that found by Cline, Crafter & Prokopiou (2014), but other data seem to contradict them to some extent, e.g. regarding the emotional impact of CLB on children and teenagers. Therefore, it would be very useful to replicate this study, using the questionnaire and methodology provided, in order to gather more data and be able to map CLB across different regions, countries or, hopefully, the whole world.

An effort has been made to create and validate a questionnaire that is available for the research community in online format, that could easily be used in any country or culture and that is short and precise. The questionnaire could in fact be easily adapted for use in any other field where CLB takes place, such as hospitals or social services, making minimal changes to some questions. Thus, we hope it will be used by other researchers, since just having more data from different countries and cultures will shed light on the matter and provide a clear picture of the CLB phenomenon.

Mapping CLB would have a positive impact on many issues. On the one hand, it would help the young brokers and their migrant families become aware of what they are already doing, and this might empower children and teenagers in their new society through a reevaluation of heritage languages, and maybe make them think of studying to become professional translators and interpreters. On the other hand, regarding the authorities and administrations, it would raise awareness of the risks of this practice beyond communication to conduct minor bureaucratic tasks and the need to employ professional interpreters and cultural mediators.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The project has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation & Universities (ref. RTI2018-098566-A-I00).

REFERENCES

- Antonini, R. 2010. The study of child language brokering: Past, current and emerging research. *Mediazioni* No. 10, 1-23. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/11585/81126> (10 September 2021)
- Antonini, R. 2015. Child language brokering. In: Pochhacker F. (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*. London/New York: Routledge. 48.
- Antonini, R. 2017. Through the children's voice. An analysis of language brokering experiences. In: Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. (eds.) *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation: State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 315 – 335.
- Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. 2017. Introducing NPIT studies. In: Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. (eds.) *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation: State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 2–26.
- Arumí, M., Bestué, C. & Gil-Bardají, A. Forthcoming. Los menores de origen inmigrante en la intermediación lingüística: visibilización de un fenómeno social.
- Arumí, M. & Rubio-Carbonero, G. Forthcoming. Reflecting on past language brokering experiences: how they affected children's and teenagers' emotions and relationships.

- Bestué, C., García-Beyaert, S. & Ruiz de Infante, B. 2012. Barreras lingüísticas en los servicios públicos en Cataluña. La percepción de los trabajadores. *Sendebare* No. 23. 37-59. <https://doi.org/10.30827/sendebare.v23i0.29> (10 September 2021)
- Buriel, R., Perez, W., DeMent, T. L., Chavez, D. V. & Moran, V. R. 1998. The relationship of language brokering to academic performance, biculturalism, and self-efficacy among Latino adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 20. 283–297.
- Cirillo, L. 2017. Child language brokering in private and public settings: Perspectives from young brokers and their teachers. In: Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. (eds.) *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation: State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 295-314.
- Cirillo, L., Torresi, I. & Valentini, C. 2010. Institutional perceptions of Child Language Brokering in Emilia Romagna. *Mediazioni* No. 10, 269-296. URL: <http://www.mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it/index.php/no-10-special-issue-2010/167-institutional-perceptions-of-child-language-brokering-in-emilia-romagna.html> (10 September 2021)
- Cline, T., De Abreu, G., O'Dell, L. & Crafter, S. 2010. Recent research on child language brokering in the United Kingdom. *MediAzioni: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies on Language and Cultures* No. 10. 105–124. URL: <http://mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it/index.php/no-10-special-issue-2010/173-recent-research-on-child-language-brokering-in-the-united-kingdom.html> (10 September 2021)
- Cline, T., Crafter, S. & Prokopiou, E. 2014. *Child Language Brokering in School: Final Research Report*. The Nuffield Foundation. URL: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/48376/> (10 September 2021)
- Crafter, S., Cline, T. & Prokopiou, E. 2017. Young adult language brokers' and teachers' views of the advantages and disadvantages of brokering in school. In: R. S. Weisskirch (ed.), *Language Brokering in Immigrant Families. Theories and Contexts*. New York: Routledge. 224-244.
- Foulquié-Rubio, A. I. 2015. *Interpretación en el contexto educativo: la comunicación docentes-padres extranjeros*. (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, Spain). Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/362090> (10 September 2021)
- García-Sánchez, I. 2010. (Re)shaping practices in translation: How Moroccan immigrant children and families navigate continuity and change. *MediAzioni: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies on Language and Cultures* No. 10. 182-214. URL:

<http://mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it/index.php/no-10-special-issue-2010/170-resaping-practices-in-translation-how-moroccan-immigrant-children-and-families-navigate-continuity-and-change.html> (10 September 2021)

- Hall, N. & Sham, S. 2007. Language Brokering as Young People's Work: Evidence from Chinese Adolescents in England. *Language and Education* Vol. 21. No. 1. 16-30.
- Harris, B. 1976. The importance of natural translation. *Working papers in bilingualism* Vol. 12. 96-114.
- Harris, B. & Sherwood, B. 1978. Translating as an innate Skill. In: Gerver, D. & Sinaiko H. W. (eds.) *Language interpretation and communication*. New York: Plenum Press. 155-170.
- House, S., Umberson, D. & Landis, K. 1988. Structures and processes of social support. *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 14. 293-318.
- Jones, C., Trickett, E. & Birman, D. 2012. Determinants and consequences of child culture brokering in families from the former Soviet Union. *American Journal of Community Psychology* Vol. 50. No. 1/2. 182-196.
- Jones, C. J. & Trickett, E. J. 2005. Immigrant adolescents behaving as culture brokers: A study of families from the former Soviet Union. *The Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 145. No. 4. 405-428.
- Morales, A. & Hanson, W. E. 2005. Language Brokering: An Integrative Review of the Literature. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 27. No. 4. 471-503.
- Orellana, M. F. 2017. Dialoguing across differences: The past and future of language brokering research. In: Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. (eds.) *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation: State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 65-80.
- Orellana, M. F. 2009. *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.
- Pena Díaz, C. 2019. Child language brokering: challenges in Spanish intercultural education. *Intercultural education* Vol. 30. No. 4. 368-382.
- Pöchhacker, F. & Kadric, M. 2014. The Hospital Cleaner as Healthcare Interpreter: A Case Study. *The Translator* Vol. 5. No. 2. 161-178.
- Pryor, C. 2017. Language brokering: When you're the only one in the house who speaks English. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-10/when-kids-translate-for-their-migrant-parents/8767820> (10 September 2021)

- Rubio-Carbonero, G., Vargas-Urpí, M., Raigal Aran, J. Forthcoming. Child language brokering and multilingualism in Catalonia: Language use and attitudes in a bilingual region.
- Shen, Y., Tilton, K. E. & Kim S. Y. 2017. Outcomes of Language Brokering, Mediators, and Moderators: A Systematic Review. In: Weisskirch R. S. (ed.), *Language Brokering in Immigrant Families. Theories and Contexts*. New York: Routledge. 47-72.
- Titzmann, P. F. 2012. Growing up too soon? Parentification among immigrant and native adolescents in Germany. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* Vol. 41. 880–893.
- Torresi, I. 2017. Seeing brokering in bright colours: Participatory artwork elicitation in CLB research. In: Antonini R., Cirillo L., Rossato L. & Torresi I. (eds.) *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation: State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 337-357.
- Tse, L. 1995. Language brokering among Latino adolescents: prevalence, attitudes, and school performance, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 17. 180-193.
- Valdés, G. 2003. *Expanding Definitions of Giftedness: The Case of Young Interpreters from Immigrant Families*, Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2006. Emotional aspects of language brokering among Mexican American adults. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development* Vol. 27. 332–343.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2007. Feelings about language brokering and family relations among Mexican American early adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence* Vol. 27. 545–561.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2017. A Developmental Perspective on Language Brokering. In: Weisskirch R. S. (ed.), *Language Brokering in Immigrant Families. Theories and Contexts*. New York: Routledge. 7-25.

¹ Data retrieved from the Migration Data Portal (<https://migrationdataportal.org/>), based on data from UN DESA. Last access: 2 November 2020

² Source: Migration Data Portal (<https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/family-migration>). Last access: 2 November 2020.

³ Source: Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training:

<https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/estadisticas/no-universitaria/alumnado/matriculado/2018-2019.html> Last access: 2 November 2020

⁴ URL: <https://unprofessionaltranslation.blogspot.com/> Last access: 3 September 2021

⁵ MIRAS stands for Mediation and Interpreting: Research in the Social Areas. The group was founded in 2009 at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and is coordinated by Dr Marta Arumí.

⁶ The ‘Young Natural Interpreters’ project has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the EYLBID project (Empowering Young Language Brokers for Inclusion in Diversity) has been funded by the European Commission (Erasmus Plus strategic partnership).

⁷ URL: <http://child-language-brokering.weebly.com/> Last access: 2 November 2020

⁸ Data obtained from official statistics of the Education Department of the Catalan Government, accessed on 20 April 2021. <https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=aec&n=742&lang=es> and <http://educacio.gencat.cat/ca/departament/estadistiques/estadistiques-ensenyament/curs-actual/>

⁹ Data obtained from INE 2020, accessed on 20 April 2021.

<https://www.ine.es/dynInfo/Infografia/Territoriales/capituloGraficos.html#!mapa>

¹⁰ Data obtained from INE 2020, accessed on 20 April 2021.

<https://www.ine.es/dynInfo/Infografia/Territoriales/capituloGraficos.html#!mapa>

¹¹ The original questionnaire also included a set of questions addressing the impact of CLB on second language acquisition, especially considering the sociolinguistic context where the study was conducted (Catalonia is a region with two official languages). These variables are not developed in this article due to space limitations, but are further explored in Rubio-Carbonero, Vargas-Urpí and Raigal (forthcoming).

¹² In fact, as part of a broader research project, interviews and focus groups have also been conducted by the research team. See, for instance, Arumí, Bestué and Gil-Bardají (forthcoming) and Arumí and Rubio-Carbonero (forthcoming).

¹³ The second largest migrated community is the Italian one, which is also the official nationality of many Argentinian residents in Barcelona, whose native tongue is Spanish and who thus never require CLB.