

MIRAS

Mediació i Interpretació:
Recerca en l'àmbit social



CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING IN A BILINGUAL REGION:

How does it reflect and affect language use and
attitudes?

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Context

- Child Language Brokering (CLB) as a complex phenomenon
- CLB in the province of Barcelona from a sociolinguistic perspective
- Catalonia as a region with official bilingualism → Catalan and Spanish, two languages with different status and social values
- Brokers are more likely to become aware of the different status of the languages they use or are in contact with (Valdés, 2014)

Previous research (1): Language attitudes & use

- Catalan is (even) less spoken among migrants (Fabà Prats & Torres Pla, 2020)
- Possible 'mirror effect' among speakers of other minoritized languages (e.g. Punjabi or Amazigh) (Larrea Mendizabal, 2016; Cortès-Colomé et al. 2016)
- Catalan spoken in the welcome class (*aula d'acollida*) but Spanish spoken with friends (Reyes & Carrasco, 2018)
- Linguistic decapitalization vs. plurilingualism fostered institutionally (Reyes & Carrasco, 2018)
- Inverse intergenerational language transmission mostly of Spanish (Llompart Esbert, 2016)



Previous research (2): CLB & language development

- CLB provides the broker with a unique opportunity to develop and practise the different languages they speak (Buriel et al., 1998).
- They are confronted with situations in which they must deal with adult- level language → more advanced vocabulary.
- Recent research shows that brokering experiences may enrich child language brokers' heritage language (Flores et al, 2003; Angelelli, 2016), since it enhances language awareness (Orellana & D'warte, 2010), and revitalises language skills (Valdés, 2014).

Objectives

How multilingualism takes place in an officially bilingual context by:

- Exploring the linguistic reality of these language brokers (language use).
- Analysing the attitudes they have towards the different languages they speak (which in turn condition their use).
- Studying if and how CLB influences children's acquisition and proficiency in each of the spoken languages.

Research method



INTERVIEWS

- exCLB (19)



QUESTIONNAIRES

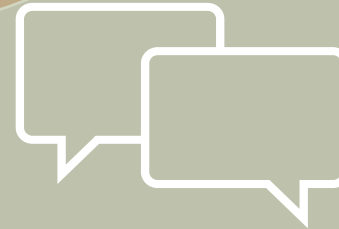
education (60)

social services (96)

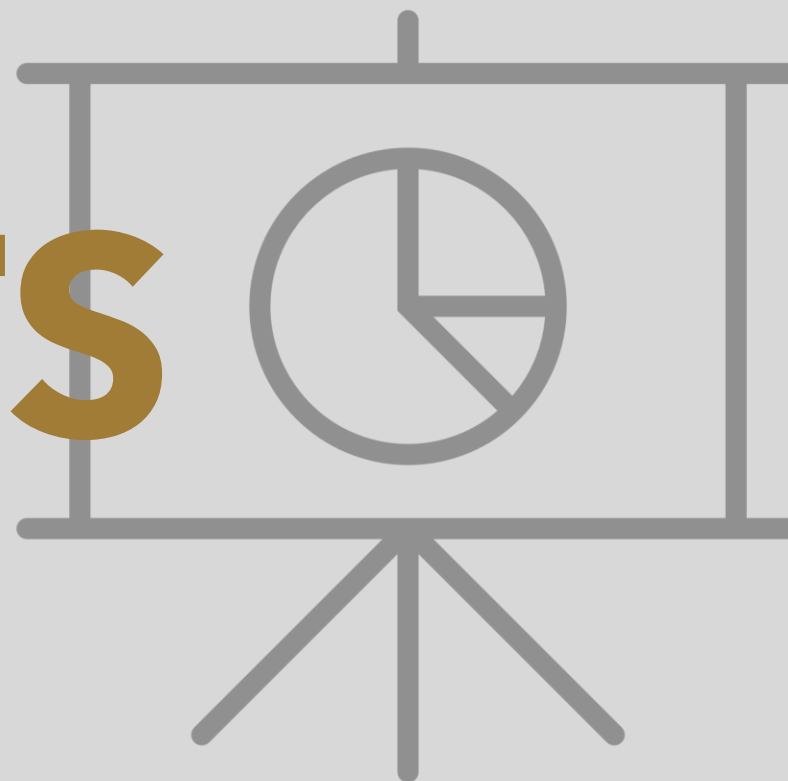


FOCUS GROUP

(6 participants)

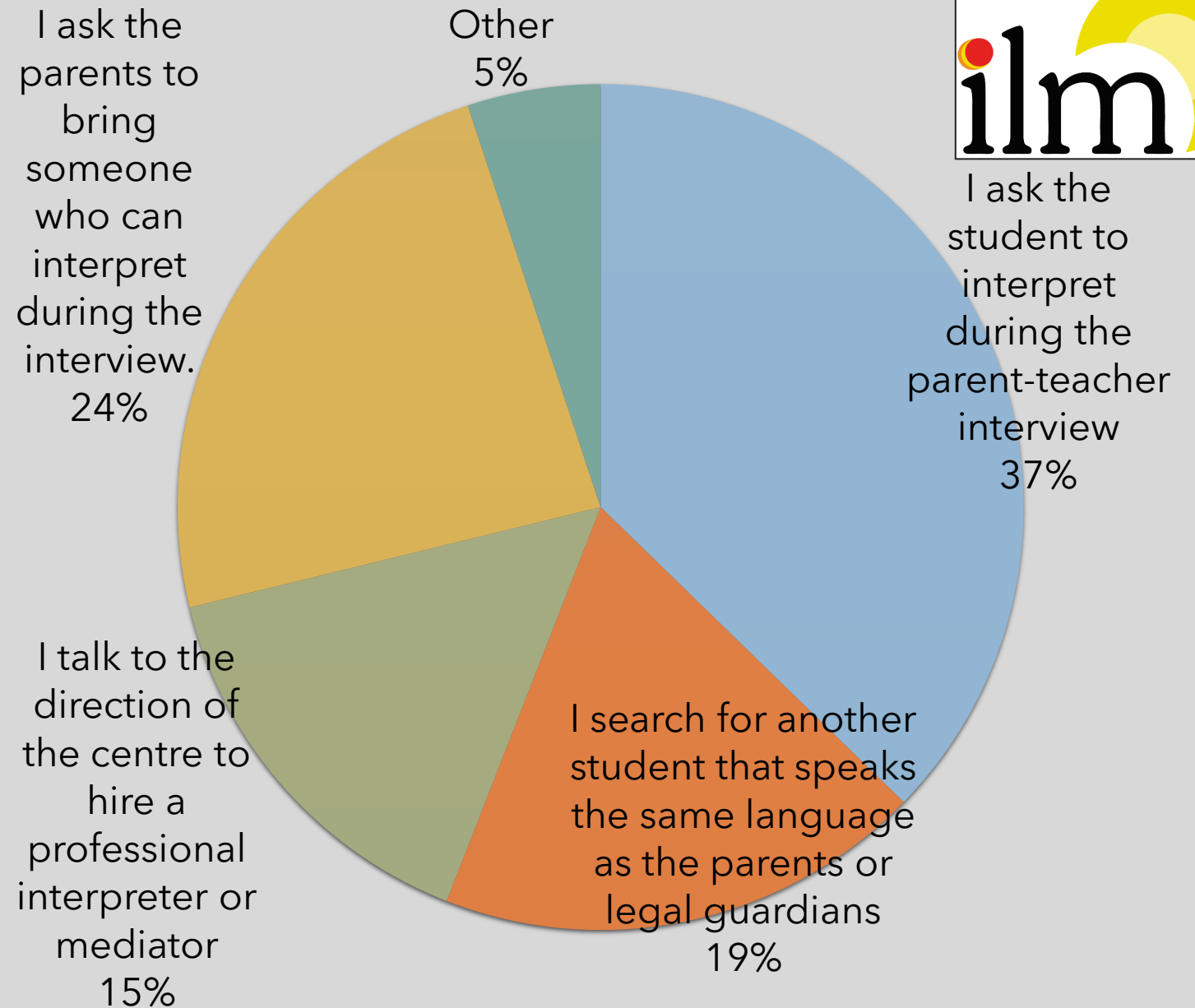


RESULTS

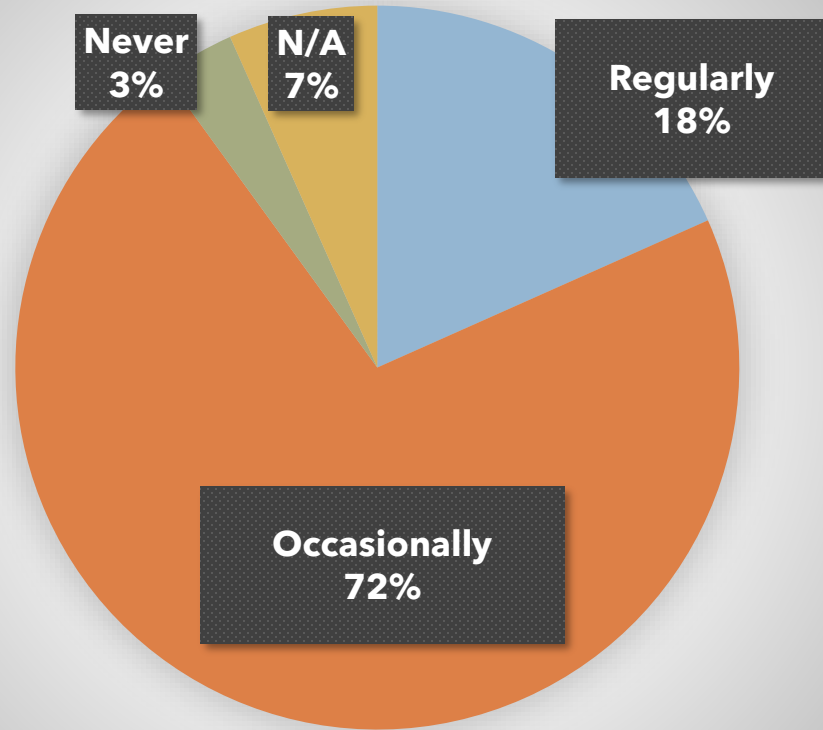


When you need to communicate with a student's parents or legal guardians and they have limited competency in Spanish or Catalan, what do you do?

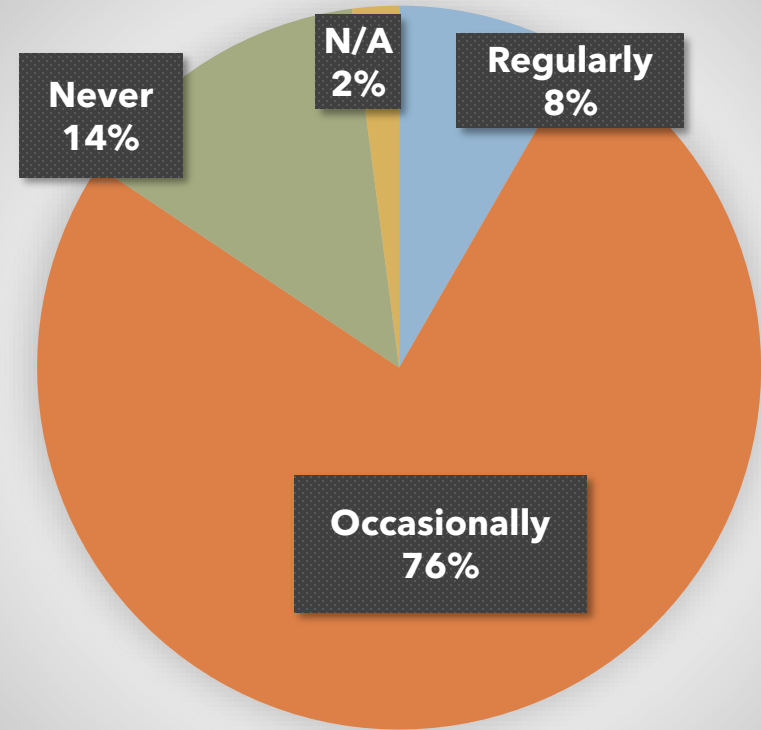
(only education)



How often does CLB occur in your centre?



Education



Social services

Languages Used by (Ex)-Child Language Brokers

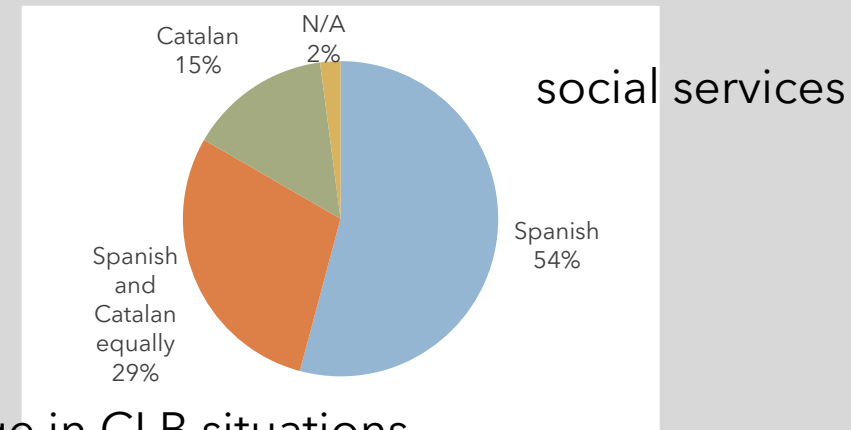
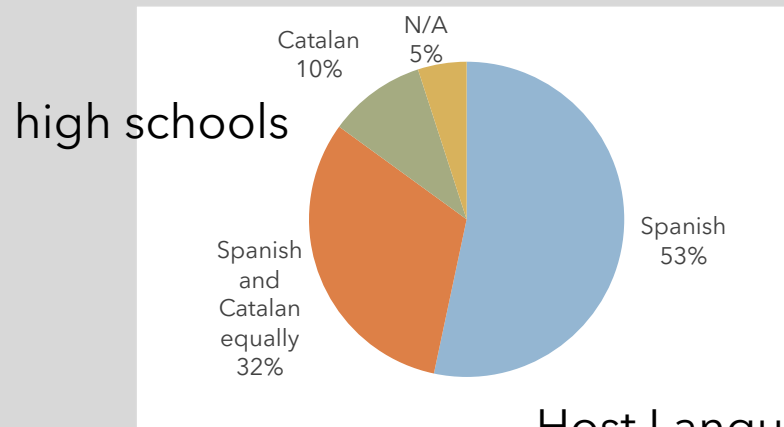


With my parents Darija... well, they also think, well, the children go to school here in Spain so "I will speak with them in Darija, so that they learn our language". Where are we supposed to learn Darija but at home? Then, I speak Darija with my parents and Spanish with my siblings, because we are used to it...and it is easier too.

Farah, ex-CLB

Languages spoken (19 informants)

- **36.8%** speak one of their heritage languages outside home;
- **47.3%** speak both host languages;
- **36,9%** speak only Spanish;
- **15.7%** speak only Catalan.



Host Language in CLB situations

Attitudes towards the Spoken Languages by (Ex)-Child Language Brokers



We speak Catalan among the teachers; when I did a placement with the town hall I only spoke in Catalan, because I don't think they like to speak Spanish there, and I'd been speaking Catalan with them for a year.

Jameela, ex-CLB

The first years I used Catalan more. Catalan was the first language I learnt in the Welcome Class and I didn't have many Spanish friends at that time... I was always with my teachers and I always spoke Catalan with them. Then, at university, I met people from all over Spain and the world, and began to use more Spanish than Catalan (...). People are surprised when you speak Catalan with an Asian face [laughs]... And people ask you many things. Often I want to avoid the questions so I talk in Spanish...

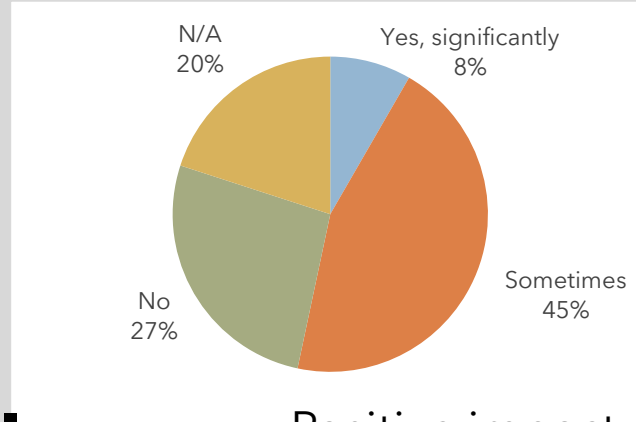
Li, ex-CLB

Spanish	Catalan	Spanish and Catalan	Heritage language	Heritage language + host languages	Heritage language + Catalan	Totals
7	1	3	2	2	2	17

Impact of CLB on the spoken languages

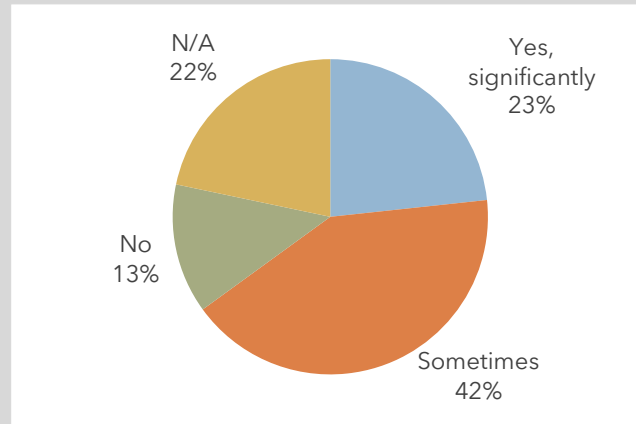
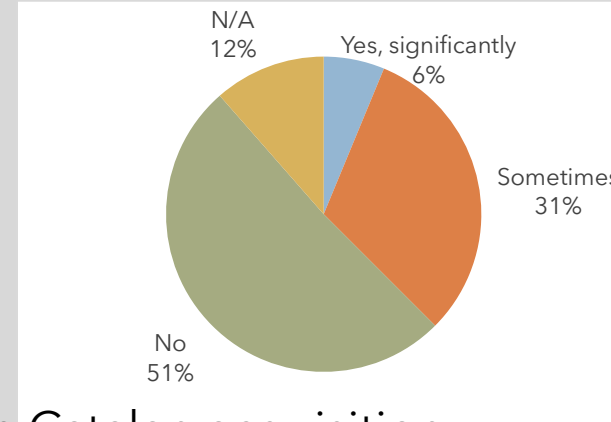


high schools

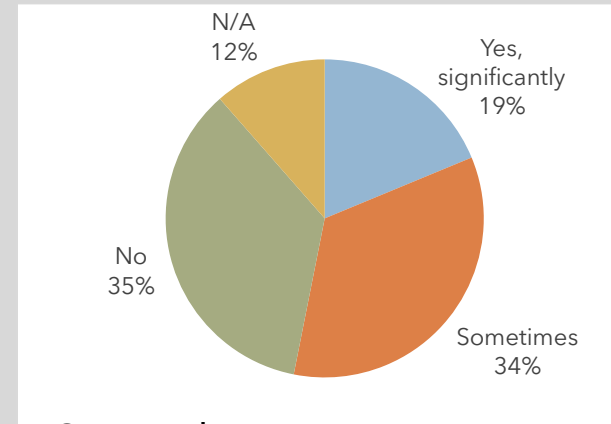


Positive impact on Catalan acquisition

social services



Positive impact on Spanish acquisition



Impact of CLB on the spoken languages



Yes, both languages. Because otherwise you don't expand your vocabulary, I wouldn't know how to call these documents in Chinese or in Spanish, because it's very technical vocabulary that you have to learn at the time.

Zhousi, ex-CLB

In my case being an intermediary influenced me a little, because I learnt more Arabic and became more interested in learning it, because the Arabic I spoke was only from the end of primary school. Doing these jobs helped me to update my Arabic.

Farah, ex-CLB

- **26%** felt that CLB helped them improve in Catalan and Spanish
- **78.9%** acknowledged that thanks to CLB they improved their communicative skills in their heritage language.
- **36.8%** Heritage culture awareness/sense of belonging

Conclusions

Language use:

- 68% of the participants spoke two or more languages at home.
- Competent bilingualism: 40%
- Competent trilingualism: 36%
- No answer: 24%

Language attitudes:

- Majoritarian preference for Spanish as a brokering language and to communicate with the host society.
- However, some ex-CLBs often related Catalan to the most frequently used language in education and academic environments, as well as in the administration.
- Protect Catalan vs. promote multilingualism

CLB and language development

- According to service providers, CLB helped sometimes to improve L2 acquisition (especially Spanish)
- According to (Ex)-CLBs, a more advanced vocabulary acquisition in L2 was reported.
- According to (Ex)-CLBs, heritage language and culture was revitalised thanks to CLB.

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Thank you!



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