

**THE SOCIAL IMPACT AND ACADEMIC ADVANCEMENT OF YOUNG  
BILINGUAL LANGUAGE BROKERS AND THEIR ABILITY TO  
MEDIATE COMMUNIATION**

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Spanish

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by

Lauren Harper-Pappas Machta

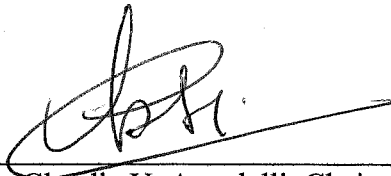
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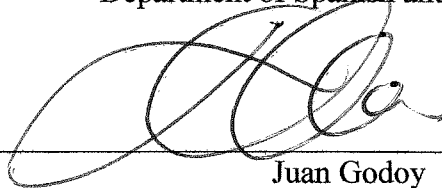
Thesis of Lauren Harper-Pappas Machta:

The Social Impact and Academic Advancement of Young Bilingual Language Brokers and  
their Ability to Mediate Communication



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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to both my husband and my family, for always believing in me.

The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future.  
This is the essential challenge of the present.

- Robert F. Kennedy

## **ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS**

The Social Impact and Academic Advancement of Young  
Bilingual Language Brokers and their Ability to Mediate  
Communication

by

Lauren Harper-Pappas Machta  
Master of Arts in Spanish  
San Diego State University, 2011

Young bilinguals assist their families with their day-to-day endeavors by serving as interpreters and translators. Their development is shaped by the linguistic practice of language brokering. The way in which these young bilinguals mediate the communicative needs of the family is evidence of their talent and capabilities. Furthermore, it reflects the communicative possibilities existing in the society in which these bilinguals develop. As bilingual children attempt to help monolinguals whose linguistic needs are not accommodated by our society, it would be beneficial for them to receive positive attention in a classroom. This could be achieved by encouraging them to speak two languages, and assisting them in improving their skills. A curriculum based on their skills that addresses their needs would promote and prolong their learning and provide the experiences necessary to develop a future career path for these young language brokers.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of several individuals. I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who has helped by contributing their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, my utmost gratitude goes to Dr. Claudia V. Angelelli as my thesis adviser and chair. Her inspiration, mentoring, patience and steadfast encouragement guided me through the entire process. Her energy and work ethic are something I can only aspire to. I am also grateful for her help in making my writing more clear and concise.

I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Professor Juan Godoy and Dr. Ghada Osman for their encouragement, support and insightful comments.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family for their unflagging love and support throughout my life. None of this would have been possible without the strength and patience of my family all these years.

And last but not least, my husband who stood by me through the good and the bad times. His constant encouragement, support and valuable insight truly kept me moving forward. I would never have been able to finish my thesis without his guidance, love, and support.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The history of the United States began and continues with waves of immigrants bringing their own cultures and traditions to a new country. There are very few places in the world that have such a diverse population. It is this diversity that makes the U.S. unique in the world and produces many of the social and economic challenges we face. There are over 300 languages known to be spoken and read in the U.S. (Modern Language Association [MLA], 2009). Among minority groups, Latinos are the fastest growing demographic in the country with a population that increased by 28%, making up 37.6% of California's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). According to current projections 25% of U.S. residents will be of Latino origin/heritage by 2030 (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).

The Latino population has been swiftly evolving and its demographic impact on the nation is changing rapidly. These demographic changes increasingly impact all aspects of U.S. society, especially in the delivery of services (Angelelli, 2004). Even though there are government-funded programs which have been mandated to provide interpreting services to limited-English-speaking patients (Angelelli, 2010a), the challenges faced by immigrant families on a daily basis are significant. In the absence of a qualified language interpreters and translators, language can be one of the most difficult barriers to overcome for both the service provider and for the individuals requiring assistance (Torres, 1998, as cited in Angelelli, 2010b). Many parents of immigrant families frequently do not have a command of the English language when they settle in the U.S. Parental figures often depend on their children, to act as language interpreters (Valdés, Chavez, & Angelelli, 2000), by brokering communication and advocating for their families' needs (Angelelli, 2010b).

This thesis will explore the reasons behind young children and adolescents being asked to translate and interpret. In addition, it will expose the need to break down the stigmas that currently surround the field of child language brokering and demystify the stereotypes of young bilinguals and their abilities. Although there are both adverse and advantageous roles in language brokering among young bilinguals, the adverse factors should not be seen as a

deterrent to the act of mediation but rather as a catalyst for changing the perception of the less favorable aspects of language brokering since its benefits are too great to be dismissed. Working through the current concerns and understanding why they happen and how they occur will allow educators, programs, and families, to foster a student's brokering ability. This first chapter will examine the influence that Latinos have in our communities by exploring immigration trends and the geographical distribution of this population. This information lays the groundwork in understanding the significant role that the young Latino population plays in the U.S. when facilitating communication in their communities through language brokering.

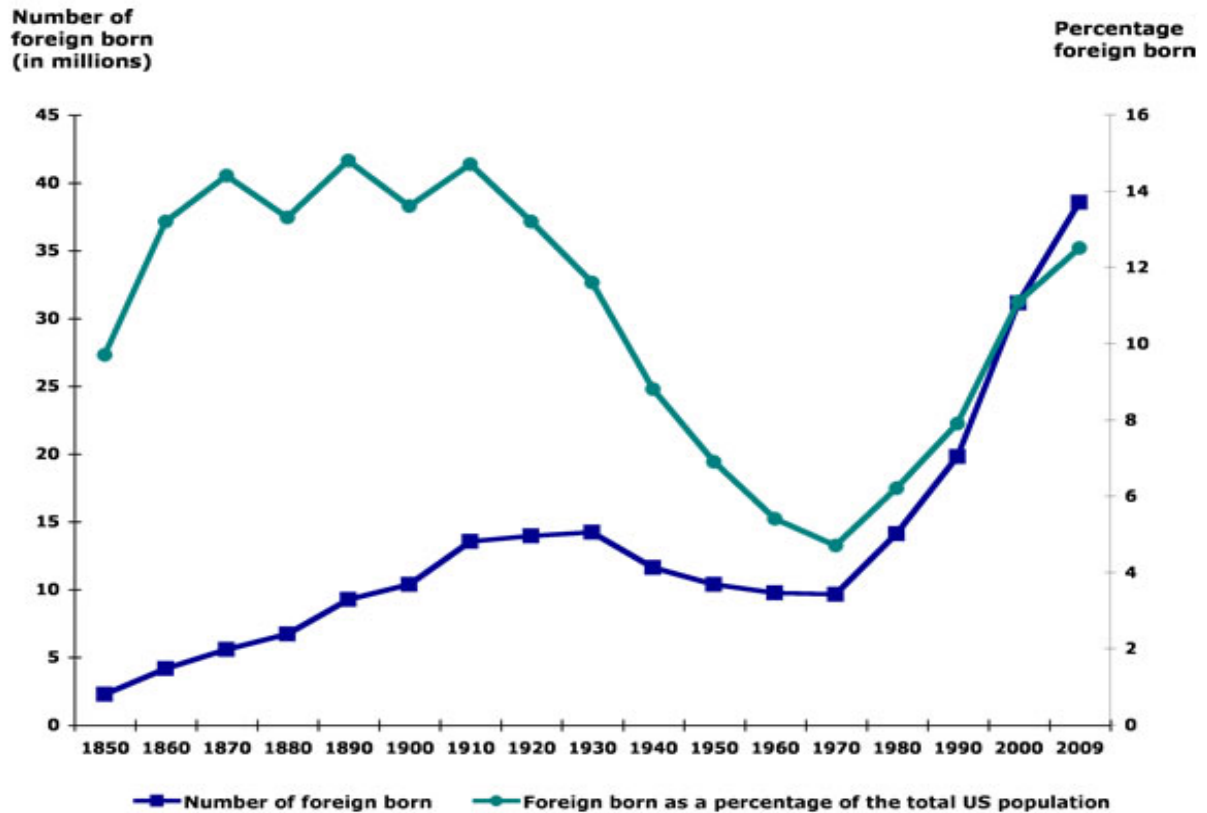
### **HISTORICAL NUMBERS OF IMMIGRATION**

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are over 37 million foreign born immigrants in the U.S. The historical numbers of immigrants were first tabulated in the 1850 decennial census. That year, over 2 million foreign born residents accounted for 9.7% of the total population. Immigrant population fluctuated between about 13% and 15% between 1860 and 1920 and was due primarily to the European immigration during this period (see Figure 1). Since 1970 however, this percentage has risen rapidly, mainly due to large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a).

The predominance of immigrants from Latin American and Asian countries in the early 21st century contrasts unmistakably with the foreign born European immigrants through 1960. Previous to 2008, no single country accounted for more than 15% of the total immigrant population. Since 2008, 46.9% or 38.0 million foreign born immigrants reported Hispanic or Latino origins.

### **GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION**

There is an enormous amount of statistics and analysis that describes the rapid and extensive growth of the Latino population in the U.S. According to the latest U.S. Census (2010b), large concentrations of Latinos are no longer confined to a few regions of the country; such as Southern California or the Southwest. Instead, the Latino population has exploded in communities that were not traditionally recognized.



**Figure 1. Foreign-born population and foreign born as percentage of the total U.S. population from 1850 to 2009. Source: Migrant Policy Institute. (2007). *Foreign-born population and foreign born as percentage of the total US population, 1850 to 2009*. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.**

The Latino population was historically established in urban settings. However, the 2010 U.S. Census reveals that the distribution across the metropolitan landscape is changing dramatically. In 1990, the Latino population was almost evenly split between suburbs and central cities (Suro, 2002). The Latino population has grown into heartland cities beyond the traditional immigrant gateways (MacDonald & Carrillo, 2010) in much less time than it took for the European immigrants who arrived at the beginning of the 20th century (Suro, 2002). Recent research on metropolitan areas provide evidence that one fifth of the cities' populations in the 100 largest U.S. cities would have declined if it were not for the quick and sizeable influx of Latinos in the 1990s (Berube, 2001). Another study also identified the growth of racial and ethnic diversity in suburban areas (Frey, 2001). Statistics found in Table 1 establish that California had four of the top ten counties (Santa Clara, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego) in terms of number of immigrants including counties with large growth rates in Riverside and San Bernardino counties (Suro, 2002).

**Table 1. Ten Metro Areas with the Largest Latino Populations, 2000**

	<b>Number of Latinos</b>	<b>% of Total Population</b>	<b>Latino Growth</b>
Los Angeles	4,242,213	45%	105%
New York	2,339,836	25%	60%
Chicago	1,416,584	17%	143%
Miami	1,291,737	57%	123%
Houston	1,248,586	30%	211%
Riverside & San Bernardino	1,228,962	38%	324%
Orange	875,579	31%	206%
Phoenix	817,012	25%	261%
San Antonio	816,037	51%	67%
Dallas	810,499	23%	324%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,087,045</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>130%</b>

Both the U.S. Census and American Community Surveys indicate that California is one of the leaders in population growth of Hispanic immigrants. Thus, it is necessary to address the needs of the growing Latino population and immigrants in California.

### **CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANT PARENTS**

In 2008, there were approximately 16.3 million children age 17 and under with at least one immigrant parent. This accounted for 23.2% of the 70 million children age 17 and under in the United States. Furthermore, the number of children with immigrant parents has continued to grow over the past years. For example, between 1990 and 2000, the number of children with immigrant parents grew 59.7%, meaning a jump from 8.2 million to 13.1 million. In comparison, between 2000 and 2008, the number grew 24.2% from 13.1 million to 16.3 million. Many immigrants live in households that are linguistically isolated. In California, 32% of immigrants live in households where no one older than age 13 speaks English “very well.” Nationally, the percentage is similar at 31%. Households living in linguistic isolation in California include Spanish, the most common language spoken (68%), followed by Chinese (8%) and Vietnamese (5%) (Public Policy Institute of California, 2008).

Students who enrolled in U.S. primary and secondary schools speaking languages other than English are generally children of newly arrived immigrants. Statistics reflect that there are two groups within the immigrant population who arrive between early childhood and young adulthood. They are either children of highly educated professionals from industrialized countries or children of uneducated laborers from some of the world’s poorest third world countries (Valdés, Chavez, & Angelelli, 2003). Immigrant parents who do not

speakers of the native language often rely on their children to function as the representative of the family in American society. This helps lighten the burden and stress of the transition (Baptise, 1987; Rumbaut, 1994) into a new culture with different values and customs and also with a new linguistic environment (DeMent & Buriel, 1999). Children tend to acquire a second language much more quickly than adults and often begin to serve as the family translator and/or interpreter. For this reason, children are immersed into the culture through public schools. They are surrounded by others and are forced to learn the language at an accelerated rate. These bilingual children are referred to as young language brokers.

### **YOUNG BILINGUALS BECOMING YOUNG INTERPRETERS**

Many immigrant children assist their parents, grand-parents and fellow community members in a unique way. Young bilinguals serve as their family interpreter/translator by brokering communication. Through language brokering, bilingual children assist their families with their day to day endeavors. This includes simple tasks such as ordering a family dinner at a restaurant or paying household bills, to more advanced tasks such as attending medical exams with their parents. It is quite common for these bilingual children to be presented with the opportunity to translate or interpret for their monolingual family members (Valdés et al., 2003). Even though language brokering among young bilinguals is a common circumstance in immigrant communities, limited research studies have been conducted on young interpreters. Bilingual children and adolescents who perform as interpreters have a unique gift that should be recognized and embraced. By enhancing their bilingual abilities, they would be able to identify the value of knowing two or more languages (Angelelli, 2010a). In addition, young language brokers would value their own interpreting and translating skills that they use to help members of their families and communities, as well as benefit from their interpreting experiences.

The emotional benefits that young language brokers gain by helping their family or community members are vast. As bilingual children attempt to help monolinguals whose linguistic needs are not accommodated by our society, it would be beneficial for them to receive positive attention in a classroom, by encouraging them to speak two languages, and assist them in improving their skills. That is why a curriculum of classes based on their skills



and needs would promote and prolong their learning and most definitely benefit them and their communities (Angelelli, Enright & Valdés, 2002).

## **OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

In Chapter 2, a review of literature will examine the different research and investigations that have been conducted concerning language brokering among children. Child language brokers will be identified and explored in order to understand the diversity of their bilingual abilities. By looking at the qualities, concerns and benefits that young language brokers exhibit, research and investigations will attempt to highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of child language brokers. This chapter will help construct a clear understanding of what has been done in the past and what work still needs to be done in the field.

Chapter 3 will focus on the definitions and classification of bilinguals with a specific focus on circumstantial bilinguals. A more technical approach will be taken in this chapter in order to define the different concepts of bilingualism. In addition, the cognitive advantages and the skills that child language brokers acquire as circumstantial bilinguals will shed light on how they become brokers for their families. This will lead into the roles that they play as mediators of communication.

The main focus of Chapter 4 will be to discuss the role of child language brokers in their family and in their community. The goal will be to examine the parts that young bilingual language brokers play during their interactions. The varying and valid concerns including child labor, which can often interfere with children's education and makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, will be discussed. In addition, the positive effect of language brokering in children will be explored in regards to their unique cognitive, metalinguistic and academic achievements.

A social and educational approach will be taken in Chapter 5 in the context of bilingualism and the educational status of Latinos in the U.S. Issues in bilingual education and English Language Learner (ELL) programs will be examined. The chapter will investigate and help understand why young immigrant language brokers have been overlooked in regards to being acknowledged for their unique abilities. In addition, teacher

awareness and parent involvement will be discussed. A brief glimpse into Latino education will illustrate the role that it plays in their development.

Chapter 6 will review proposed programs and curriculum for young language brokers. The aim will be to recommend future research ideas and practice in the development of an educational program for young bilinguals that accommodate the richness and complexity of a multilingual learning environment. The discussion will revolve around the importance of establishing future programs to assist immigrant language brokers through the public education system. Also, a look into the economics of education will illustrate the long term benefits of educating bilingual Latino students today.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING**

This chapter reviews the literature regarding child language brokering. Language brokers are children of immigrant parents who translate and interpret for their families. Immigrant families often find themselves struggling in the acculturation process in the U.S. (Borrero, 2006) and also in their ability to access public and private resources and services. The children of these families are thrust into playing an instrumental role in the family's survival. Language brokers facilitate their parents' acculturation process (Buriel, Love, & DeMent, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999), as well as advocate for them during interactions with a variety of monolingual English speaking agents. A review of the literature will illustrate the different language brokering interactions, the common characteristics among language brokers, and the types of documents they translate and the type of situations they encounter. In addition, different studies and perspectives show how language brokering impacts a child's cognitive development, academic success and parent-child relations.

#### **DEFINING LANGUAGE BROKERS AND THEIR ABILITIES**

This section describes the common qualities among young language brokers. When immigrants arrive to the U.S., they face countless challenges. Simple acts of communication and social interactions in a new language and culture are one of the greatest challenges for those with limited English proficiency. Many times, the children of immigrant parents assist by translating and interpreting for their families (Orellana, 2003, 2009; Tse, 1995b, 1996b; Valdés et al., 2003; Zentella, 1997). Children who accept this role for their families as translators and interpreters are commonly referred to as language brokers (DeMent & Buriel, 1999; Harris, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1992; Harris & Sherwood, 1978, as cited in Angelelli 2010b; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). Language brokering is a frequent phenomenon among bilingual children with immigrant monolingual parents who require communication with monolingual English speaking professionals (Halgunseth, 2003; Orellana, 2003).

Research on young bilinguals as language brokers is scarce and is a relatively new field of study (Angelelli, 2010b). Language brokering has notable origins; as far back as the historical figure La Malinche, the Nahuatl woman who played a role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico by acting as interpreter, advisor, lover and intermediary for Hernán Cortés in the 16th century (Cypess, 1991). Studies regarding child language brokering rose during the middle of the 1990's (Morales & Hanson, 2005). Past studies reveal that language brokering is a common activity among many immigrant children and adolescents (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana, 2003; Tse 1995a, 1995b, 1996a; Valdés, 2003).

As previously stated, research into the phenomenon is limited with the exception of early work on language brokering (Harris, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1992; Harris & Sherwood, 1978; as cited in Angelelli, 2010a, 2010b; Toury, 1984, 1995). Current studies examine the fields of linguistics, sociology, behavioral sciences, anthropology, youth development, psychology and education. In light of the research conducted in the past two decades, there is still a lot of information to uncover regarding the development, practice and impact of language brokering (Morales & Hanson, 2005). Children in California and the nation translate and interpret between two languages in conversations. Child language brokering can occur in a variety of settings (e.g. stores, schools, banks, post office, restaurants, offices, at home) and children often translate and interpret for their parents, siblings, peers and teachers (DeMent & Buriel, 1999; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana, 2003; Orellana, Dörnyei & Pulido, 2003; Shannon, 1990; Tse 1995b; Valdés, 2003; Valdés et al., 2000). They often start brokering shortly after their arrival to the U.S (Cohen, Moran-Ellis, & Smaje, 1999). Children tend to begin brokering within 1 to 5 years after their arrival to the U.S, (Cummins, 1989; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse 1995a, 1995b, 1996b; Valdés et al., 2003) due to their ability to acquire the societal language at a more rapid rate. Language brokering can start as young as 8 or 9 years of age (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse 1995a, 1995b, 1996b).

### **Bilingual and Bicultural Identity Development**

In addition to helping their family members accomplish simple everyday tasks, many children of immigrants become an important bridge between their families' heritage and cultural identity with the U.S. culture and institutions (Valenzuela, 1999). Children find themselves performing not only as language brokers but also as cultural brokers. They are

usually the first in their families to gain exposure to the English language and cultural norms through school, where they are immersed in U.S. culture (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). Children use their newly bilingual and bicultural knowledge to assist the family and gain access to opportunities, resources, and information (Halgunseth, 2003). What is unique is that children possess the ability to adapt to the U.S. cultural and social environment upon arrival while learning English. This skill is used to mediate communication between the local language and their native language.

Children acquire a level of knowledge concerning the native culture and the new surroundings due to their brokering abilities (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Walinchowski, 2001). Research shows a correlation between biculturalism and language brokering (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, & Moran, 1998; Tse, 1996a). Children in a study (DeMent & Buriel, 1999) state they feel like teachers because of how they instruct their parents to American cultural traditions, values and celebrations.

### **The Acculturation Process and Bilingualism**

For language brokers, the acculturation process is typically accelerated once they attend school. Exposure to situations requires them to utilize their knowledge in both native and host cultures and languages (Acoach & Webb, 2004). In Tse's (1996a) study, over half of the students state that language brokering facilitates the development of both of their languages. In addition, one third of the students report that language brokering helped them learn more about their native and host cultures. Buriel et al. (1998) argues that a child's access to multiple cultures and languages creates adolescents that are less prone to be affected by the unfavorable effects of acculturation, which includes psychosocial and behavioral disorders, disorders that often detract from students' academic performance.

Parents do not randomly select a child to broker communication, but recognize the exceptional ability of the child to mediate between two cultures and two languages. Their decision is built on the characteristics and traits of the child (Chao, 2002; DeMent & Buriel, 1999, Valdés et al., 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Child language brokers are chosen because of their proficiency in two languages, their confidence, and sociable behavior. Parents state that a successful and efficient language broker is someone who is tactful, provides details when relaying the message, and a good listener. In addition, they are capable of communicating

their feelings, emotions, and emphasize important information (Valdés et al., 2003) as well as understand the cultural aspects involved in the interaction.

### **WHEN AND WHERE LANGUAGE BROKERING TAKES PLACE**

Language brokering is a common activity (Orellana, 2003) and ranges from a simple word to word translation, to understanding a menu at a restaurant or interpreting a parent-teacher conference (Orellana et al., 2003). Children are often language brokers when professional interpreters are not available (Angelelli, 2010b; Cohen, Moran-Ellis & Smaje, 1999). They meet the needs of our changing demographics in the U.S. For example, in the qualitative study by Cohen, Moran-Ellis, and Smaje (1999), children were used as interpreters when doctors needed to understand the symptoms of a patient during a medical exam. Children also often serve as mediators between parents and teachers in schools. Teachers use their students' bilingual ability when having a question about a word in Spanish, for example, when writing a note home to a family member (Gullingsrud, 1998; Tse, 1996b; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002) or when conducting a parent-teacher conference (Tse, 1996b).

### **CONCERNS IN THE FIELD OF CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING**

In various research studies, children state there is a strong desire to help their parents, but at the same time there is a feeling of inadequacy, frustration and distress because of brokering (DeMent & Buriel, 1999; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Ng, 1998; Walinchowski, 2001; Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). There are conflicting reports and results regarding the impact that language brokering has on children. In some cases, language brokering is considered as an obligation and creates a sense of duty for the child. Studies indicate uncomfortable feelings during interpreting and translating interactions (Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). Children reported feeling more like an adult when interpreting or translating (Santiago, 2003; Tse, 1995b). Young language brokers take on complex and challenging adult-like responsibilities and influence decisions that affect the entire family (Tse, 1995b).

Participants in the study by Orellana et al., (2003) express feelings of embarrassment and shame when translating or interpreting in public commercial environments. Parents

notice that language brokering places stress on the child (Shannon, 1990, Tse, 1996b). Furthermore, researchers claim that children who broker are at risk for lower academic results (Umaña-Taylor, 2003). Brokering can limit the time and focus a child can put towards education with the adult-responsibilities the child provides to the family.

Children as language brokers are more involved in mature and adult situations with a heightened level of sensitivity when assisting their parents in problem solving and decision making circumstances (McQuillan & Tse, 1995). Similar issues were revealed during a qualitative study regarding children as language brokers in a medical setting. Doctors and general practitioners participating in the study felt that children who assisted their parents may not have the knowledge necessary to adequately translate or interpret medical terminology (Cohen et al., 1999; Umaña-Taylor, 2003). In addition, doctors and nurse practitioners in the study reported that it was unacceptable to use children as interpreters or translators when discussing sensitive information (Cohen et al., 1999), such as intimate problems or gender specific issues. Also, a child may exhibit stress when learning about a parents' health issues.

Role reversal is another possible consequence of language brokering. Parent-child relationships can become skewed when children are involved in family decisions where the parents depend on advice, guidance and ultimately making a final decision (Umaña-Taylor, 2003). These concerns will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4. Although brokering is reported as stressful at times for language brokers, children often feel proud to be helping their parents (Borrero, 2006; Orellana et al., 2003; Tse, 1996a; Valdés et al., 2003). The next section will navigate through the possible benefits of child language brokering in regards to cognitive, metalinguistic and academic advantages.

### **BENEFITS OF CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING**

Language brokering has an impact on the normal dynamics of the parent-child relationship (Cohen et al., 1999). Young language brokers state they established stronger and a more trusting relationship with their parents through language brokering (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Straits, 2010). For example, in the legal domain of language brokering, children use their linguistic abilities to protect their families (Orellana et al., 2003; Valdés et al., 2003). Findings from a qualitative study demonstrate that child language brokering

significantly contribute to the quality of the parent-child relationship and is associated with more positive feelings within it (Straits, 2010).

A study conducted by Valdés et al. (2003) focused on identifying giftedness through linguistic and cultural lenses. All 25 students in the study illustrated success in transmitting the meaning of the message, including tone. In addition, the students conveyed all information correctly and in a timely manner. By executing the interpreting task, the young language brokers demonstrated sophisticated abilities that are not often displayed by bilingual minority children. Their skill competence also points to the definitions of giftedness. These skill sets emulated the qualities educators look for in gifted and talented students. The study concluded that young language brokers who enroll in the specially designed program for their abilities performed at extremely high levels of achievement when compared to other students their age.

Furthermore, a pilot program for child language brokers, The Young Interpreters Program at the Bay School in San Francisco Bay Area, was implemented by Borrero (2006). It provided opportunities for students to develop skills in both Spanish and English through translation and interpreting training. By labeling the students as young interpreters or language brokers, rather than as English language learners, students play a different identity at school when given new opportunities to succeed. Students took on a positive and unique role in the school (Borrero, 2006). The responses from the students were feelings of happiness and pride when assisting in communication. In addition to emotional feelings, there were also constructive cognitive and linguistic factors surrounding the findings of language brokering that will be explored further in the following segment.

### **Development of Cognitive and Metalinguistic Skills**

Language brokering enhances the development of higher cognitive abilities, allowing the children to increase their linguistic talents and improve their social and interpersonal skills (DeMent & Buriel, 1999; Halgunseth, 2003; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995a, 1996a; Walinchowski, 2001). Children often interact in an adult context, which requires the use of advanced vocabulary and cognitive abilities (Acoach & Webb, 2004). Language brokers do not simply translate or interpret a message literally, word-for-word, in another language, but they develop a number of metalinguistic skills to compose the messages in a



meaningful way. Higher cognitive ability is in use when translating a medical bill or interpreting at a government institution. Some of the cognitive and metalinguistic abilities language brokers use include their heightened attention and knowledge of non-verbal behaviors. Non-verbal behaviors include body language and facial expressions, signals based on the context of the interactions and the transmission of culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive messages. They determine whether they have accurately understood and conveyed the meaning of the message correctly, and if not, ask for clarification. In Buriel et al.'s study (1998), it states language brokers who participate in an extensive number of settings develop more sophisticated language competencies than children who only broker in one setting.

With higher cognitive and metalinguistic competency, language brokers illustrate an increased level of ability in standardized testing for reading and math (Orellana, 2003, 2009). Language brokers who read and interpret written documents develop a number of reading strategies that are useful in school. Some of the strategies include paraphrasing (Orellana, 2009), using their knowledge of cognates, skimming and rereading for specific information, and knowing when to ask for help (Orellana & Reynolds, 2008). Also, language brokers with daily exposure to reading a financial or bank statement and balancing check books illustrate an increase in knowledge of real world math. All of these cognitive skills provide advantages to language brokers in an academic context. These metalinguistic and cognitive skills can ultimately translate into better academic achievement (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel et al., 1998; Dorner, Orellana, & Li-Grining, 2007; Tse, 1995a), which will be discussed in the following section.

### **Academic Achievement through Language Brokering**

An encouraging result from numerous studies is the correlation regarding language brokering and academic performance success. In general, children who function as language brokers perform better academically, and have higher self-confidence (Buriel et al., 1998; Halgunseth, 2003; Orellana, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999) and a more positive relationship with their own biculturalism (Buriel et al., 1998; Chao, 2002; Halgunseth, 2003). Furthermore, studies conclude that when children broker at school with school-related vocabulary, these interactions help build their lexicons and improve their school performance (Halgunseth,

2003). Language brokering also assists in learning English at a quicker pace than standard schooling. However, academic performance of young language brokers is often overshadowed by traditional educational assessment instruments. Schools fail to capture the real abilities of language brokers (Morales & Hanson, 2005). Guidelines for a curriculum in interpreting and translation were developed for young bilinguals at the high school level who interpreted for their families and community (Angelelli et al., 2002; Valdés et al., 2003). The research team argued on behalf of young language brokers and special linguistic abilities. Their aim was to encourage immigrant students through a program which allowed the students to pursue both English and their native language in the classroom.

Moreover, language brokering allows children contact with both languages (Shannon, 1990). This allows children to expand their first language as well as help with the acquisition of their second language (Krashen, 1985; Tse, 1996a; Angelelli, 2010a). Language brokers outperform their non-brokering English Language Learner (ELL) peers in the classroom. As previously mentioned, the study conducted by Orellana, (2003) claims that children who served as interpreters and translators perform better on standardized testing in math and reading. Furthermore, Dorner et al. (2007) found that language brokering was significantly correlated to fifth- and sixth-graders' higher standardized reading test scores. In a similar line of research, studies concluded that students who act as language brokers received higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs) than their non-brokering language minority peers (Acoach & Webb, 2004).

Another example of academic achievement through language brokering is the supportive environment found in Borrero's (2006) program. The program facilitated the communication between parents and teachers while at the same time provided a new perspective on interpreting for the students. The stimulating community within the program provided an inspirational and a gratifying environment not always associated with interpreting interactions. In the Bay School program, an environment was created where a student from a Spanish-speaking home is valued and appreciated. Through the program, students learn new skills and techniques which will be explored in further detail in Chapter 5.

The young language brokers succeed because of their bilingualism (Borrero, 2006). The research in the program successfully provides a context and curriculum for young adolescents to enhance their skills as bilinguals. To continue on this path of exploring young

language brokers and their unique bilingual abilities, the following chapter will examine the definitions of bilinguals and the dimensions of bilingualism. This will provide the linguistic groundwork necessary to understand how children become language brokers, their distinct roles, and how language brokering impacts their lives and well-being.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **BILINGUALS AND FACTORS THAT SPUR BILINGUALISM**

This chapter will define bilinguals, with a focus on circumstantial bilinguals as young language brokers. Circumstantial bilinguals are individuals who learn another language in order to survive (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). Also, bilingualism will be defined in order to identify the different classifications of this linguistic phenomenon. The second segment of the chapter explores the cognitive advantages of bilinguals, specifically literature regarding the impact that bilingualism has on a child and on young language brokers.

#### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BILINGUAL**

The number of individuals with bilingual skills increases due to a shifting of the population across the world. The movement of the populations is a factor that has triggered the phenomenon of bilingualism in recent decades (Grosjean, 1982, as cited in Angelelli 2010b). Bilingual individuals outnumber monolinguals (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 2006) and the number of bilingual speakers will continue to increase in the coming years. A bilingual is an individual who has the ability to communicate utilizing more than one linguistic code (Rolstad & Macswan, 2010). However, this does not mean that an individual has absolute mastery of two languages. Few individuals are equally knowledgeable in each language and do not utilize them with the same frequency or in the same situations (Myers-Scotton, 2006).

Simply defining bilingualism as the ability to speak two languages at a native level (Bloomfield, 1935, as cited in Angelelli 2010b) would exclude many different types of bilinguals (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Native languages are acquired during the formative years of a child's development. For example, Switzerland has four official languages; German, Italian, Romansch and French (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2011). Children are often taught more than one language from an early age. Children acquire language skills by learning from two different social settings; for example, an Indian child learning English at

school and Hindi at home. A second language can also be acquired in school, for example, an American student electing to study Spanish to fulfill a high school or university graduation requirement. The level of knowledge of each language is influenced by a number of elements including but not limited to psychological, cognitive, psycholinguistic, social, sociological, socio-cultural and linguistic factors (Hamers & Blanc, 1989).

It is important to understand the definitions in the field of bilingualism. Definitions and classifications illustrate the connections that bilinguals have with their linguistic abilities and the different variables that characterize a speaker's bilingual abilities. Bilingualism includes a large range of proficiencies and contexts. Defining and classifying bilingualism is problematic since individuals with varying skills are categorized as bilingual regardless of their overall ability to utilize the language. The classification of bilinguals is addressed in the following section.

### **THE CLASSIFICATION OF BILINGUALS**

The classification of bilingualism goes beyond levels of proficiency. Hamers and Blanc (2000) define bilingualism as an individual's ability and use of two or more linguistic codes as a way of social communication. This access to two different linguistic codes goes hand in hand with a number of psychological, cognitive and social dimensions. These dimensions include cultural identity, cognitive organization, presence of second language in community or environment, relative competence, age of acquisition and social cultural status (Hamers & Blanc, 2000).

One way to view bilingual language assessment is from a theoretical linguistics perspective. The principal systems of phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax are factors that define an individual's language skills. From a syntax and morphology perspective, an individual possesses a better than average understanding of grammar (Myers-Scotton, 2006), thus making the bilingual proficient in reading and writing in two or more languages. An individual who describes himself/herself as a bilingual may only communicate verbally in a social or non-formal environment.

From an applied linguistics perspective, researchers may look at language acquisition and development through, but not restricted to, the scope of academic fields such as psychology, sociology, education and anthropology. These different fields of study identify

aspects that assess a speaker's language ability and proficiency. Bilinguals are labeled under a multitude of categories. Some for example, adapted from various researchers (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 2006; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994) focus on particular characteristics of an individual's bilingualism:

- Age of acquisition (early: simultaneous and sequential; late)
- Functional ability (incipient, receptive, and productive)
- Relationship between the bilingual's two languages (ambilingual and equilingual/balanced or active and passive)
- Context of acquisition and the effects of the bilingual (coordinate and compound)
- Stages in the lives of bilinguals (ascendant and recessive)
- Circumstances leading to bilingualism (elective/elite/academic and circumstantial)

There is no complete agreement regarding the definitions and classification of bilinguals and their bilingualism. The focus of this thesis is based on the bilingual qualities of young language brokers who exhibit sequential and circumstantial characteristics.

A sequential bilingual is a speaker who becomes bilingual by first learning one language and then another. A circumstantial bilingual is an individual who was forced by circumstances such as for political reasons, a better economic situation, immigration, or shifting borders to become bilingual because their native language is not the national language (Myers-Scotton, 2006; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). For example, in the United States, circumstantial bilinguals have been the result of colonization in regards to the tribal lands of the Native Americans (House, 2002) and also in terms of immigration like Mexicans who come to reside in the U.S. for better economic opportunities. Circumstantial bilinguals fall under the circumstance in which lead to their bilingualism or social cultural status.

Early research in the first half of the 20th century suggested that learning two languages was detrimental to childhood development (Tinajero, Munter, & Araujo, 2010). During the 1920's researchers studying the correlation between bilingualism and intelligence (Saer, 1923; Yoshioka, 1929) concluded that this was true. It was generally believed that second language learning in early childhood interfered with the linguistic development and cognitive functions. More relevant and recent studies offer different conclusions to earlier beliefs regarding bilingualism and elaborate on the cognitive advantages.

## COGNITIVE ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUALISM

Recent studies reveal different findings regarding whether or not being bilingual is an advantage. Studies conducted in the early 1960s (Haugen, 1961; Jones, 1960; Peal & Lambert, 1962) concluded that the previous research that speculated that bilingualism had negative effects on an individual used flawed methodology. In 1999, Gonzalez's study concluded that the disadvantages of being bilingual originated as a result of low IQ test results. The previous studies indicated that monolinguals were intellectually superior to bilinguals. These tests favored native English speakers in cultural, socioeconomic and linguistics aspects, making the tests biased and did not measure bilingualism correctly.

More recently, balanced and mixed methodologies are being utilized to demonstrate the benefits of bilingualism on a child's overall cognitive development (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Kenner, 2000). Recent research results now illustrate bilingual individuals who are fluent in two or more languages possess cognitive advantages when compared to those who only speak one (Bialystok, 2001; Pease-Alvarez & Hakuta, 1992). Research results conclude that bilinguals show better problem resolution skills as well higher creativity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Torrance, Gowan, Wu & Aliotti, 1970;). The knowledge of two or more languages is advantageous to an individual, especially to children who acquire a second language at a younger age. Studies demonstrate that bilinguals tolerate more ambiguity and are more flexible cognitively speaking which allows them to communicate more effectively with others (Khan, 2011; Lambert, 1987; Hamers & Blanc, 2000).

In the 2003 study (Hitti, 2004), the gray matter of the brain was reviewed in terms of bilingualism. Gray matter makes up the bulk of the nerve cells in the brain. Studies have shown a correlation with gray matter density in terms of volume and intellect, especially in areas of language, memory, and attention (Hitti, 2004). Brain imaging has shown that bilingual speakers possessed denser gray matter compared with monolingual participants in the study. The difference was considerable in the brain's left side, which is the region of the brain known to control language and communication skills. In addition, those who are learned English at a young age achieved greater proficiency in reading, writing, talking, and understanding English speech.

Moreover, in another study, tests on 104 participants between the ages of 30 and 88 found that those who were fluent in two languages had quicker brain functions. During the study between the English and Tamil languages, researchers evaluated the cognitive skills using a variety of tests. The results reported the people in all age groups who were fluent in English and Tamil responded more rapidly than those who were fluent only in English (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2004).

Researchers over the last century confirm definite advantages of bilingualism in cognitive areas (Carlson & Henderson, 1950; Haugen, 1961; Jones, 1960; Peal & Lambert, 1962; Vygotsky, 1962a, 1962b). Studies indicate advantages of being bilingual with respect to cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness and abilities, communicative sensitivity, concept formation (Ben-Zeev, 1977; Cummins, 1978, 1979; Feldman & Shen, 1971; Ianco-Worrall 1972; Lambert, 1977; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Torrance et al., 1970) and recently the delaying of age-related diseases like dementia (Khan, 2011). There are social, cultural, educational and economic benefits for bilinguals as well, which are reflected in the young language brokers outlined in this thesis. The next section will explore how young bilinguals become language brokers in order to assist their families. They become an important bridge between their families and U.S. institutions. These children use their newly acquired bilingual knowledge to help their families gain access to resources and information.

### **HOW AND WHY YOUNG BILINGUALS DEVELOP INTO LANGUAGE BROKERS**

When Latino immigrants arrive in the U.S., young members of the family are typically the first to attend U.S. schools and learn English (Angelelli, 2010b; Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, more than one in five school-aged children use English as a second language in the U.S. (2010). When parents of immigrant families speak only Spanish for example, the children are often called upon to interpret and mediate linguistic and cultural information for adults (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel et al., 1998; Chao, 2002; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995a; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). Many immigrant parents frequently depend on their children to assist with the family's needs; such as paying bills, ordering food, and attending/making medical appointments. Child language brokers stand in and represent their family because members of the family may not have the ability to speak, mediate and



participate in communicative interactions for themselves (Angelelli, 2010b). They effectively facilitate the communication of a message from the source-language to an equivalent target-language (e.g. from English into Spanish) while keeping the true meaning intact. Language brokering is not simply a by-product of bilingualism. Often times it is a necessity for the immigrant family to survive and exist in a new social environment (Valdés, 2003).

Being bilingual does not automatically make that individual an interpreter or translator. Translating and interpreting are complex events that require skills that are not intuitive to most bilinguals (Angelelli, 2006; Angelelli, 2010b; Bell, 1991). These skills include finding the equivalency of words and ideas across languages and cultures. When combined with cross-cultural social skills, the challenge becomes even greater. The successful performance as an interpreter or translator is based on how a message is conveyed.

As previously stated, the majority of young language brokers are circumstantial bilinguals who use their abilities to mediate communication for family and community members (Angelelli, 2010b). Researchers categorize bilinguals who act as language brokers as circumstantial because they have no choice when acquiring the new language. Young bilinguals act as a liaison between their parents and members of the community as language brokers. Children who act as translators and interpreters demonstrate their talent and potential capacity in the field of translating and interpreting.

In addition, community members such as teachers, doctors, and social service providers also look to these young bilinguals for assistance in communication with the adults of the family in public institution or commercial settings (Orellana, 2009). Immigrant children are powerful social actors when playing the role of language brokers. They can exercise power to control conversations which lead to their remarkable influence on the flow of information. Their skills along with their upbringing and their respect for elders allow them to secure information, services, and goods for their families.

Even though the skills in the field of young language brokers are largely overlooked, their importance should not be underestimated. The study of immigrant youth as language brokers is a body of work developing from several disciplines including education, linguistics, psychology and sociology. All of these fields present different facets of the role that these young language brokers play. By looking at the different aspects that influence

language brokers, researchers can begin to argue on behalf of these bilinguals and assist them with their unique linguistic abilities.

This chapter introduced the linguistic phenomenon of bilingualism. The segment analyzed the attributes, characteristics and categories that bilinguals exhibit. This lays the linguistic groundwork for comprehending the important role that young bilinguals assume as language brokers in society. The next chapter will provide a detailed look at language brokering and its impact on young bilinguals.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **YOUNG LANGUAGE BROKERS: COMPETENCE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT**

Even though children serving as interpreters and/or translators have been widely accepted among immigrant communities, it is still a controversial topic. Language brokering is a different experience for each individual. There are common challenges associated with family duty and responsibility that all language brokers encounter. A different perspective is presented in this chapter regarding the possible advantages of child labor through language brokering. Children who participate as language brokers for their families are a vital ingredient to their family's success and well-being. Child language brokering should not be dismissed simply because of the challenges it may present, but rather it should be considered for its potential positive effects. These issues will be discussed in this chapter and present both perspectives on the debate about child language brokering.

#### **LANGUAGE BROKERS AND LINGUISTIC ADAPTATION**

When immigrant families arrive to the U.S., they face a multitude of complex challenges. These challenges include the adoption of a new culture along with a new set of rules, norms and standards in an unfamiliar environment. In addition, linguistic challenges also stand as an obstacle during this adaptation process. The process of acculturation begins immediately upon arrival to the U.S. for both adults and children; however the rate of adjustment varies among the two groups (Martinez, 2006). As families adapt to the new environment, parents often rely on their children to assist the family. Education and daily attendance in school allows children to acquire English language proficiency more rapidly than their parents. In addition, school attendance exposes them to the cultural norms and expectations in U.S. society (Gonzales, Knight, Morgan-Lopez, Saenz, & Sirolli, 2002; Martinez, 2006). However, various concerns have been raised regarding young bilinguals who act as language brokers. Some argue that the role is disruptive to a child's development, while others applaud the results and positive effects.

It is important to look at the history and current setting of child labor and acknowledge the possible burdens and associated stress that can impact the children's growth and development when involved in brokering interactions. To better understand the beneficial effects that young bilinguals can experience as language brokers within their communities, it is crucial to define and review the historical background regarding child labor.

### **HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK OF CHILD LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES**

Child labor is defined as work that harms children because it is abusive, exploitive, hazardous, and not in their best interest (Weston, 2005). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) follows a similar definition but also adds that it is work done by children that keeps them from attending school. Forms of child labor, including indentured servitude and child slavery (UNICEF, 2011), have existed throughout history. Child labor became a social problem in North America over 100 years ago (Liebel, 2004). The goal of this segment of Chapter 4 is not to minimize the various and tragic forms of worldwide exploitation and abuses of children in the world today, but to illustrate the diverse forms of work and significance that work can have for children. The intention is to clarify and analyze the important contributions that children make to their families and communities in safe and responsible ways. To understand the present concerns regarding child labor, it is important to look at the past in order to plan for the future.

As industrialization moved workers from an agricultural based setting and home workshops into urban areas and factory work, children were the preferred form of labor. Factory owners viewed them as more manageable, cheaper, and less likely to strike. American children worked in various fields such as mines, factories, textiles, agriculture, canneries and also as newsboys and messengers. In the early decades of the 20th century, the amount of children employed in the U.S. peaked. Child labor began to decline as the labor and reform movements grew and labor standards in general began improving (Weston, 2005). The increase of political power of working people and other social reformers began to demand legislation regulating child labor. The National Consumers' League in 1899 and the National Child Labor Committee in 1904 both shared common goals of challenging child labor. The National Child Labor Committee fought to end child labor and with combined

efforts of others was able to provide free, compulsory education for all children, and culminated in the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. This act set federal standards for child labor. (Liebel, 2004; Weston, 2005;)

Today researchers consider that a moderate quantity of work hours in relatively light or high-quality jobs can bring benefits to children (Goodnow & DeLaney, 1989; Goodnow & Warton, 1992; Liebel, 2004). They also recognize that the contributions of working children are important to family and communities and promote both their self confidence and independence. Job experience and aiding others in need provide an opportunity to learn, use, and develop valuable skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. In addition, children who work will be viewed as experienced and skilled individuals, which will increase their likelihood of future employment. In recent years, there have been ongoing the debates about working children through campaigns for children's rights. According to Liebel (2004) different non-government organizations (NGOs), including UNICEF and the International Working Group on Child Labour (IWGCL, 1997) for example, have various social scientists currently opposing an exclusively negative evaluation and general prohibition of working children. Liebel (2004) continues to explain how the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 was passed by the United Nations General Assembly to evaluate children's work and whether or not it would be damaging to the child's physical, social or intellectual growth. Since then, CRC demands and practices a more varied analysis of the forms, conditions and cultural contexts of children's work.

### **UNFAVORABLE FACTORS THAT PLAY A ROLE IN YOUNG BILINGUALS THROUGH THE SCOPE OF LANGUAGE BROKERING**

Young language brokers use their knowledge of English and U.S. culture to mediate and communicate for their parents. However this communication event can create anxiety and stress for both the child and the adults in the family (Orellana, 2009). There are arguments regarding the negative effects of delivering sensitive adult information, such as interpreting a cancer diagnosis to a parent. This may have an impact on the parent-child relationship and possibly traumatize the child. Moreover, there are concerns that brokering can cause a role reversal in a parent-child relationship. Role reversal can influence a young bilingual's development by exposing the adolescent to responsibilities and pressures beyond

their maturity level. This can lead to an undermining of parental authority which contributes to the negative effects of brokering. The tension and conflict between the young language brokers and their family members can range from annoyance to feelings of pressure and stress. Minor inconveniences that disrupt the young language brokers normal activities, like assisting a younger sibling with homework or interpreting a television show for a parent do not suggest high stress levels. However, as tasks and interactions become more complex there is a heightened sense of accountability and this places pressure on the child.

A child becomes the public representative for the parent in English-speaking settings (Love & Buriel, 2007), whether it be a social, professional or technical. Even though language brokering is an ordinary interaction, limited research shows an impact on the individual, specifically affecting family relations. These adult-like tasks and responsibilities can have adverse effects on the entire family (Kibria, 1993; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995a; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

### **Conflicts, Stress and Tension in a Parent-Child Relationship Due to Language Brokering**

Studies have linked negative feelings of frustration, stress, and embarrassment in language brokering among young bilinguals (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1995a; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). Some say it can place unnecessary pressure and strain on family relationships. Furthermore, researchers argue that language brokering can have a negative effect on the development on the child when placed in adult situations (Umaña-Taylor, 2003).

Recent research found a correlation between language brokering and family conflict with adolescents from immigrant Vietnamese families (Trickett & Jones, 2007). Feelings of annoyance, burden, and embarrassment were reported by some adolescents (DeMent, Buriel, & Villanueva, 2005). A study (Weisskirch and Alva, 2002) conducted among thirty-six fifth grade Latino children in California uncovered that levels of brokering and measures of acculturative stress differed based on gender. In their sample, bilingual girls that were more Spanish dominant had lower levels of stress associated with acculturation. On the other hand, the more English dominant boys had higher levels of stress. In a large quantitative study performed by Chao (2006), findings suggested that interpreting and translating had a negative effect on the child in relation to the psychological well-being of children in Korean

and Chinese immigrant families. Interestingly, the Mexican youth from immigrant families did not report the same reaction to brokering (Chao, 2006).

While stress can have positive influences on an individual, excessive stress can have both immediate and far-reaching negative effects on a child's adaptability and development. Stress is amplified for adolescents when they feel judged. Without adequate support to shield unnecessary stress and pressure, these feelings develop a negative impact on the growth and development of the young bilingual (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010).

### **Sensitive Elements in Language Brokering**

Adult situations, interactions, and vocabulary may not be developmentally appropriate for children who perform language brokering (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse 1995a, 1995b, 1996a; Valenzuela, 1999). Interpreters are often involved in legal, financial or medical interactions that can be complex, multifaceted and sensitive to the family's well-being (Buriel et al., 1998; Orellana et al., 2003). The ability of adolescents to completely comprehend difficult information is of concern. Their cognitive, cultural, linguistic, and social skills are not fully developed. These skills are learned through a maturation process and are required to convey complex explanations of the issues during an interaction. Furthermore, vocabulary often times presents a complex challenge for young language brokers. Comprehension and pronunciation in both languages can be complicated because of the different contexts these children find themselves translating and interpreting (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). Each setting has its own distinctive set of industry-specific jargon (e.g. schools, banks, government facilities, medical offices, legal verbiage) which raises the level of difficulty in these situations. These exchanges raise a concern regarding whether a child should be exposed to "adult" information. This required level of maturity and responsibility can often put added pressure on a child and make the language brokering interactions very stressful.

### **Concerns Regarding Language Brokering and Role Reversal**

Traditional parent-child relationships in terms of authority and responsibility are potentially blurred and altered by language brokering. Concerns exist regarding the burden placed on an adolescent as they perform the task as an interpreter or translator. Many believe

that role reversal might be harmful to the proper development of the parent-child relationships (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). Psychologists have labeled this form of role reversal as “adultification” or “parentification” (Orellana, 2009). The idea is based on the assumption that when a child performs an act of translation or interpreting for the parent, the parent’s authority may be weakened.

Young language brokers by default assume very influential roles within the family. The help of a child is important to a household, but it can also leave a parent feeling vulnerable (Lombe, 2009). Since the child is first to assimilate into the new culture, some researchers argue that the power obtained by the child or adolescent has an effect on their growth and development (Tse, 1995b). As parents find themselves deprived of power and authority; they defer difficult household decision to their children (Martinez, 2006; Tse, 1995b;).

### **THE ADVANTAGES OF CHILDREN PERFORMING AS LANGUAGE BROKERS**

Although theories and perspectives (Liebel, 2004; UNICEF, 2011) have changed in the past few decades, today there is agreement among most researchers and parents in the U.S. that a moderate amount of work can bring developmental benefits to a child. Research (Blair, 1992a, 1992b; Cogle & Tasker, 1982; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981; Zill & Peterson, 1982) indicates that having regularly assigned chores from cooking to mowing the lawn contributes to the positive development process of the child. Children have shifted from being seen as “economically useful” to being seen as “emotionally priceless” by parents (Zelizer, 1994). This means children are more likely to be assigned tasks and chores as part of the development of their personal qualities by gaining an understanding of responsibility and also increasing self-esteem.

Research on child labor in youth participation in the domestic sphere is conducted in various disciplines including education, economics, and social science. Monolingual children making contributions to households and are very rarely criticized for washing a parent’s car or babysitting a sibling. Household chores assigned to and carried out by children are an educational tool for the parents (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981; Liebel, 2004). Development through working assists in the maturation process of young children and adolescents by enhancing their abilities in positive ways.



The concepts of child growth and development, both linguistically and academically, originate from the child-centered approach (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). The child is not seen as a passive actor in society but rather as a player who actively participates in his/her own development (McKechnie, 1999). Forms of non-paying work like domestic household chores performed within the community (Liebel, 2004) are a rewarding experience for the child. This experience enlightens the child about the “real world”. Gaining early work experience gives the young individual a head start in the job market once (s)he reaches adulthood. Working teens figure out earlier which career best matches their interests and abilities. It is possible that they make professional contacts earlier, which can result in networking later in life. The experience adolescents gain, such as the ability to convey a sense of professionalism through dress, etiquette and verbal communication (Orellana, 2009), makes them more attractive to future employers (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). Job experience will have different advantages and disadvantages for children and adolescents. For over two decades, paid work has been regarded in scholarly literature as a “normal” pattern of adolescent development (Mortimer & Finch, 1996).

Research indicates young language brokers view translating and interpreting as a natural and a normal activity. Feelings of pride and enjoyment are reported in many studies (Orellana, 2003; Shannon, 1990; Tse, 1995a, 1996b; Valdés et al., 2003). Children of immigrants are closer to their families through their work as translators and interpreters. The adolescents develop greater linguistic and cultural competencies building a stronger bond between parents and children (Dorner, Orellana & Jiménez, 2008).

### **Benefits in Parent-Child Relationship from Language Brokering**

In their capacity as language brokers, children often take on adult-like responsibilities and make decisions that influence their whole family (Love & Buriel, 2007). Buriel, Love, and DeMent (2006), argue that, “traditional parent-child authority relationships within families are altered as children assume responsibility for cross-cultural transactions”. As children advocate on behalf of their families, they develop a healthy and positive parent-child relationship. Often times, mutual respect and trust lead to a stronger bond between parents and their language brokering children (Buriel et al., 2006; Chao, 2006). Since language brokering assists in maintaining the child’s native language, this further develops the bond

between the language broker and his/her parents. In the course of language brokering, children gain familiarity with their parent's values (Love & Buriel, 2007). Also, language brokering is a way for children to show appreciation to their parents by assisting them. The satisfaction derived from language brokering is correlated to a stronger parent-child bond (Love & Buriel, 2007). In addition, children report feeling of empathy for their parents as they are more aware of their parent's daily struggles.

### **Advantages of Language Brokering in Child Development**

In any household, whether or not English is spoken, children serve as information conduits. Simple acts such as answering a telephone and relaying a message to the parent illustrate this point. It is important to remember that taking on household responsibilities does not necessarily equate to a role reversal, nor does it correspond to abandonment of parental responsibility. Simple household chores like answering the phone are common in most homes regardless of the primary language being spoken. Children feel a sense of independence, pride, and maturity which contributes to feelings of self-confidence (Tse, 1995a) in addition to becoming more emotionally connected with their parents (Buriel et al., 2006).

It is important to keep in mind that the children today are the next generation of the U.S. workforce. The young language brokers through their mediation of communication are developing the necessary skills to perform professionally. Their participation in society in a professional setting assists them in developing their personal abilities and technical competence (Mortimer, 2003) and increases their chances in the continuation to higher education. Children assisting their family members perceive the value that goes along with an active presence in social settings. It allows them to gain respect and feel appreciated and recognized both within the family and outside the home (Orellana, 2009). Studies suggest that bilinguals who act as language brokers develop greater metalinguistic awareness that can lead to academic achievement (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel et al., 1998; Dorner et al., 2007; Tse, 1995a).

The research and studies reviewed in this chapter illustrate that there are two sides to the ultimate outcome of young language brokers. The section discussed conflicting arguments that represent both the positive and negative issues. It is important to point out

that youth development through chores or work can promote the positive and healthy growth of children. By providing an environment which fosters challenges, creates experiences, and supports the youth population, students will be able to facilitate their development to the fullest potential. Although concerns exist, there are advantages for children who act as language brokers. One of the most important advantages lies in academic achievement. The next chapter will explore the relationship between immigrant Latino children within their school performance in the context of language brokering and linguistic development.

## CHAPTER 5

### A GLIMPSE INTO LATINO EDUCATION

This chapter will examine the ongoing debate regarding the education of bilingual Latino students and how it has impacted young language brokers. The focus will be mainly through the studies of the Latino population. The segment will specifically address the educational system and the use of language to develop students academically. There are problems found in the linguistic politics of language in the public school districts. Focusing on English-only teaching programs and mainstreaming non-English speaking students into classrooms is the root of the problem in the U.S. Although other problems in teaching strategy and educator preparedness exist, these factors are symptoms to the real issues in the education of Latinos and ultimately language brokers.

Studies and test scores indicate that historically, Latino students have not had success in the U.S. educational system (Valdés et al., 2003). Many researchers have documented a long history of issues and lack of achievement in the public school system by Latino students (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Carter 1970; Duran 1983; Gándara, 2005; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972, 1973, 1974; Valencia, 1991). These issues include high rates of illiteracy, low enrollment/attendance and increases in drop-out rates (Arias, 1986; Duran, 1983; Rumberger, 1991; Gándara, 2005; Valencia, 1991). One underlying factor is the failure of public schools to provide a meaningful educational foundation that builds on the students' native language and culture while also assisting them in developing English language skills. Bilingual teachers and programs are important in keeping students engaged and committed to completing their education.

Findings from studies (Valdés, 2003; Valdés et al., 2000) suggest that circumstantial bilinguals who perform as language brokers are often classified as low-level English speakers by their teachers in the classroom. However, when interpreting and translating for their families, they use a much higher level of English than originally thought. In addition, during the brokering, the children are able convey the intended message with very few mistakes (Zentella, 1997). These mediation events illustrate that language brokers actually perform at

a high level in regards to interpreting and translating that allows them to convey the tone and importance of a message to their parents in English (Valdés et al., 2000, 2003). The correlation between their advanced abilities outside the classroom and their assessment of their abilities at school do not match. These children are often times placed into the lowest courses for English as a Second Language (ESL) (Angelelli, 2010b). This chapter will explore the complexities involved in the linguistic levels of Latino students in public schools and how these profiles impact their learning achievement. A brief historical background on past and current education legislation will create the foundation for the topic of this chapter.

### **LATINOS AND A MONOLINGUISTIC IDEOLOGY IN EDUCATION**

Latinos have become this nation's largest ethnic minority (Suro, 2002; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b) emerging as one of the largest minority and immigrant populations in California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas and New York (Padilla, 2006). This growth creates concern regarding how these minorities are educated in the school systems. This new minority population is a youthful one; therefore schools are the social institution impacted significantly by the population shift (Olsen, 1997).

Although the U.S. is a country founded on immigrants with a variety of languages and cultures, it has had an identity as an English-only speaking country (Gándara et al., 2000). English is used as the primary medium of instruction in public schools. Spanish is used by approximately 30 million Latinos in the U.S., and is considered a foreign language when taught in schools (Garcia & Torres-Guevara, 2010). Latinos in the U.S. and their children that attend public schools cannot all be singularly defined. They have different linguistic and cultural profiles. For example, families may use Spanish and English everyday whereas others may use Spanish as the primary language.

The term English Language Learner (ELL), indicates a person who is in the process of acquiring English and has a first language other than English. Other expressions commonly found in the literature include language minority students, Limited English Proficient (LEP), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) individuals. Therefore, young language brokers learning English can be considered ELLs. ELLs among the Latino population are growing at a rapid rate. Between 1994 and 2000 the number of ELLs in grades K-12 increased by more than 56%, while the

overall student population only increased by 12% during the same period (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007).

Language barriers have a profound effect on the academic environment which can suppress the communication and obstruct possibilities of educational and social experiences (Brandon, Baszile, & Berry, 2009). Various approaches are used to integrate English as a second language and engage both bilinguals and English learners. Monolingual ideology is the norm in education in the public school districts (Martinez-Wenzl, Pérez, & Gándara, 2010). Rather than embrace bilingualism and use alternative methods to teach the subject matter, the monolingual ideology has been the primary program. The monolingual approach does not address native language in course curriculum. This type of method values only monolingualism and neglects bilingualism, (Garcia & Torres-Guevara, 2010) therefore overlooking the young bilingual population and their language brokering skills.

However, there are changes taking place with the implementation of new bilingual programs in public schools, like the Foreign Language Academies of Glendale (FLAG) in the Glendale Unified School District (GUSD, 2011). The overall approach in these new programs and the implementation is not aggressive in accommodating bilinguals and ELL children.

### **CALIFORNIA'S BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY**

To illustrate the profound influence that education policy has on the success of California's students, a brief historical account is necessary to comprehend the true impact of these decisions. In 1968 Congress authorized bilingual education with the passage of Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the Bilingual Education Act. This Act was put into place to offer immigrants access to education in their native language. Federal spending on bilingual education jumped from \$7.5 million in 1968 to \$150 million by 1979 (Frum, 2000). A 1974 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Lau v. Nichols* gave further momentum to bilingual education. In this decision, the court ruled that San Francisco schools violated students' language rights (Frum, 2000). The Bilingual Education Act and the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling mandated that schools provide support and services to English language learners. Both bilingual and English-only programs prospered after the law's passage and the court ruling (Frum, 2000).

The concerns of limited programs for language development can be linked back to the passing of Proposition 227 in 1998. This proposition imposed one untested method for teaching English in every local school district in California and put limited English speaking children of all ages and languages into one classroom. This proposition mandates that newly enrolled ELLs be mainstreamed, after one year, into classrooms taught in English (Gándara et al., 2000). In 2000, the California Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) (Parrish et al., 2006) and WestEd to conduct a five-year evaluation of the effects of Proposition 227. One observation reported in the study was the overemphasis of an English-only philosophy. An English-only philosophy significantly restricts the use of primary language teaching as well as diminishes the focus on the student cultural identity.

In 2001, a new federal education policy was introduced, with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by the U.S. Congress. This law offers little support for native language learning, but rather emphasizes accountability in English only. It also mandates that all students, including ELLs, are tested yearly in English. NCLB places a focus on testing, assessment and outcomes representing a top down approach to education (Contreras, 2010). With these standards, educators are teaching for test scores rather than for the academic advancement of the students. Teachers are faced with the difficult task of creating techniques to elevate students' scores without affecting daily instruction (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). NCLB created an accountability system in order to develop a statewide assessment on student performance and identify areas for advancement. Although accountability and assessment are crucial to improvements in education, especially in measuring student performance, this approach has had a negative impact on Latino students at all levels, K-12 (Contreras, 2010). It is also increasing the education gap between Latino students and other significant subgroups, which ultimately overlooks the young language brokering population.

Relatively few educational policy makers and administrators can speak or write in a language other than English (Tinajero et al., 2010). Administrators and policy makers' skills and knowledge in Spanish are often controlled by mainstream educators who have implemented negative approaches to schooling. Policies seem to consider ELLs and their native languages and cultures as barriers or obstacles to schooling rather than as assets

(Nieto, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999) and are therefore overlooked or ignored. Consequently, Latino students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are at a disadvantage compared to their English-speaking classmates. This is why bilingual teachers and programs are needed. The failure of public policy in education to address non-native English speaking students will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### **EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF LATINO STUDENTS**

Latinos are entering the public schools in California at an accelerated rate. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report analyzing data from the 2007 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b), the number of people five years of age and older who spoke a language other than English at home have more than doubled in the last three decades. This increase occurred over a time period between 1980 and 2007. Spanish speakers account for the largest increase. There are 23.4 million more Spanish speakers in 2007 than in 1980 representing a 211% increase.

The failures outlined in the previous segment play a significant role in the reason why this population of the future workforce is under-educated and not properly prepared to succeed. Attempts have been made to explain the increased number of failures of ELL's in the public schools. Researchers conclude these factors are due to insufficient funding, inconsistencies of programs, as well as under-qualified teachers teaching ELL students. In addition, structural and socio-cultural obstacles of poor schooling with limited gifted and/or bilingual programs, language differences, lack of teacher preparation and parent involvement all play a role in the underdevelopment and the lower educational performance of Latino students in the U.S. (Gándara, 2005; Nieto, 2004). A language barrier is the single largest obstacle that students must overcome. Their development of English at a proficient level is imperative for them to academically advance in the school system.

An English-only approach focuses on replacing the student's native language with the dominant language in the classroom. The demands and lack of support of English proficiency frequently exceeds the students' ability and produces a daunting and difficult experience at school. Ignoring the importance of language can significantly impact the acquisition and retention of new information (Dewey, 1997) in an unconstructive manner. Consequently, many Latino adolescents in the California school system struggle to succeed



academically. Bilingual programs should organize students into learning teams, use cooperative learning strategies and encourage instructional conversation, a teaching technique consisting of verbal interaction between teachers and students, as a way of solving problems and sharing knowledge and ideas. Parents, educators, and community members need to strive to improve education for individuals who demonstrate giftedness or exceptional potential by encouraging advocacy and awareness, and sponsoring activities important to gifted and talented education.

Dropout rates for Latinos are alarmingly high. One of the most challenging issues that contributes to this achievement gap is language. Table 2 reviews the statistical dropout rates of students in California (California Department of Education, 2010). The results illustrate a huge academic achievement gap of Latino students.

**Table 2. Dropouts by Ethnic Designation by Grade, 2008-09**

<b>Ethnic Category</b>	<b>Grade 9</b>	<b>Grade 10</b>	<b>Grade 11</b>	<b>Grade 12</b>	<b>Grade 9-12 Dropout Total</b>	<b>Grade 9-12 Enrollment</b>	<b>Grade 9-12 4-year Derived Dropout Rate</b>
<b>None</b>	56	102	196	179	447	0	N/A
<b>American Indian/ Alaska Native</b>	31	52	115	153	495	15,950	23.4%
<b>Asian</b>	133	200	304	335	1,974	176,103	6.8%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	29	42	97	77	348	13,293	18.5%
<b>Filipino</b>	41	88	104	133	783	56,351	8.4%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>1,330</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>7,723</b>	<b>8,170</b>	<b>27,911</b>	<b>935,076</b>	<b>22.4%</b>
<b>African American</b>	540	796	1,804	1,993	6,442	159,737	29.0%
<b>White</b>	673	962	1,846	2,127	9,247	609,533	10.3%
<b>Two or more races, not Hispanic</b>	30	40	56	75	318	51,593	4.3%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>2,863</b>	<b>4,681</b>	<b>12,245</b>	<b>13,242</b>	<b>47,965</b>	<b>2,017,636</b>	<b>17.2%</b>

The dropout rates from the high school level correlate directly with college attendance and completion among Latinos. The lack of academic achievement and academic support leads Latino students to terminate their formal educational learning experiences at the high school level or below. They do not seek continuing education at the community college level or other institutions of higher learning. Over the past 30 years statistics show little progress in college degrees achieved by Latinos. Between 9% and 11% of the total available population actually decide to attend school beyond the high school level (Gándara, 2005). Conversely, college degrees for other major ethnic groups have continued to increase over the same period of time. A little more than half of the Latino high school population enrolls in college and a very small percentage actually completes the four years of college for a degree. This is important because higher education will lead to a more productive and successful workforce. It is imperative to see the correlation between the education of today's generation of children and the future success of our society. Education is a long term investment.

### **BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM: LATINO STUDENTS AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

A quarter of all California public school students are struggling to learn the English language in school, with 41% of the students speaking a language other than English at home (California Portable Assisted Study Sequence [PASS], 2006). These young students are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) and require special assistance from their teachers and schools districts. They are not achieving at an acceptable academic level and are not prepared to tackle the educational challenges placed in front of them. ELLs are enrolled in almost every district and in the vast majority of schools in the state (PASS, 2006).

A combination of researchers (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Zeichner, Melnick, & Gomez, 1996) found that the most successful ELL teachers have identifiable pedagogical skills, cultural skills, and knowledge to connect themselves with students and their families (Gándara et al., 2005). Teachers with pedagogical skills are those with credentials like Cross-cultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) and Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) credentials. Teachers possessing CLAD, BCLAD or equivalent credentials are more prepared to meet the needs to ELL students (Gándara et al., 2005). With these credentials, teachers are trained to assist the

students and help them adapt to the academic culture of our school system. They are trained in instruction for students learning English as a second language. Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers are essential to effective bilingual programs. Teachers should be kept up-to-date about state-of-the-art strategies for language instruction.

In order for schools to provide students with a high quality education and prepare them for higher education, bilingual education needs to be depoliticized. Programs for ELL students should not be used to segregate and marginalize the students or to diminish the quality of their education. Rather, bilingual programs should be intellectually stimulating, and designed for integration with mainstream education. They should prepare participants for greater learning challenges, in English as well as Spanish. The next section will explore teacher preparation as a critical aspect of the quality and the extent of student learning.

### **Teacher Preparedness in the Classroom with English Language Learning Latino Students**

According to the survey done by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (Esch et al., 2005), time is a factor that creates challenges for teachers in the classroom. This survey revealed that elementary school teachers had insufficient time to teach ELL students all of the required subject matter. This is a huge challenge to overcome. NCLB measures students based on test scores, not scholastic achievement, progress, or success. Teachers state their ELL students were pulled out of the classroom for English language development which hindered their regular curriculum learning. This did not provide the student enough time to learn everything missed during the pull-out period. In addition, the survey highlighted that the majority of English Language Learners were placed in mainstream classes with the intention of educating students with special needs in regular classes instead of grouping them based on academic and linguistic needs (Gándara et al., 2005).

Schools are in need of teaching practices that promote ELLs academic achievement. Research suggests that educators look into students' home and community practices to build upon the knowledge students are already developing (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). This approach acknowledges what students learn at home and in their communities is valuable and academic in nature. Language brokering is one such skill set that is developed at home and in local communities. As a way to facilitate language brokering in the school, educators must

consider the benefits of the integration of ELLs and native English speakers in the same learning environments.

### **The Role of Language and Culture in Latino Education: At School and at Home**

An important aspect of student learning comes from teachers and schools as well as from family support at home. A teacher's communication with students and their families is a very important part of a student's success. The lack of support from home may be attributed to some degree to language and cultural barriers. A teacher's failure to connect with parents to inform them of the standards, expectations and current challenges leads to the incapacity of the parents to help students with school tasks (Gándara et al., 2005). A survey done by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (Esch et al., 2005) found that 27% of K-6 teachers felt their ability to communicate and understand the families of their students was critical in assisting the student. Often times, teachers are unfamiliar with how to connect with their students' social, cultural, political, and linguistic communities to facilitate the academic growth and development of these learners. Many times, teachers view students who are linguistically different from the majority as inferior due to the student's inability to communicate and reflect his/her ability. This leads to the native language of the English learner to be prohibited in the classroom (Franquiz & de la Luz Reyes, 1998) rather than being embraced and used as a tool in the development of the student.

Researchers (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Perry & Delpit, 1998) have found a positive correlation when schools connect to the students' native language, community, and culture. The results show that this accommodation of language and culture into the classroom helps to promote a successful learning experience. Culture is an important component in school language programs and has been gaining more support in second language curriculum. Learning another language is more than just knowing about its linguistic system. Making culture an integral part of language learning is a challenging task for teachers (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). Researchers are pushing towards a more positive experience in the academic environment. Language is as an important tool which forges a relationship between the community's values, beliefs, educational policy, and practice. Further, teachers who understand their students cultural heritage improve both their ability to teach and their maintenance in connecting home and school. Communication of trust,

confidence, and the development of a mutually respectful relationship among teachers and students reinforces the children's self-esteem and fosters a connection to school that discourages them against an impulse to drop out. Language instruction that creates awareness and understanding of another culture is critical to the development of the students (Met, 1995). Exposure to cultural differences assists both students and teachers in developing sensitivity towards others (Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

In addition to these issues, the lack of appropriate assessment materials and tools available to the teachers contributes to the challenges. Specifically, the teachers feel the current state testing system uses instruments that cannot effectively evaluate academic achievement for their ELLs (Gándara et al., 2005). The teachers find it difficult to distinguish if the students' scores were low due to academic inability or due to language issues. Many EL teachers have had little training designed to help them teach these students. This is due to the fact that teachers' professional performance is measured by their class standardized test results which will ultimately lead to additional funding and resources to their school.

Latino students are frequently caught in a linguistic predicament at school between educators and policy makers. ELLs are currently a large and ever increasing part of the public school system. These students have different academic and linguistic needs. Breaking down the monolingual ideology that exists today and building on the strengths that these young bilinguals possess will encourage academic achievement in the future. Their unique abilities as bilinguals are rarely identified and developed as resources. These students use their bilingualism in complex ways that have yet to be fully explored.

Spanish-speaking students need to participate in programs that cultivate their linguistic skills. Learning a second language requires a consistent effort from schools. Schools need to convey the expectation that students will become literate in English. To provide an effective education for Latino students, public schools need to accept and embrace cultural influences to provide appropriate instruction. To promote the academic achievement of all students, schools should nurture native cultures by incorporating information about them into the curriculum and acknowledging them in school activities. In Chapter 6, suggestions and implications for the future practice of language brokering among students and the economic benefit of educating them will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN EDUCATION: IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS FOR TALENTED YOUNG LANGUAGE BROKERS**

This chapter will discuss the importance of establishing future programs, similar to the pilot-program conducted by Borrero (2006) based on the course curriculum created by Angelelli et al., (2002). This type of program is important because it embraces the development of young language brokers and their interpreting and translating skills. It has been argued (Angelelli et al., 2002; Borrero, 2006; Orellana, 2009; Valdés et al., 2003) that language brokering cultivates exceptional abilities (Angelelli, 2010b). Child language brokers are highly valuable as these bilinguals facilitate communication between their families and their community. Their roles as mediators encompass a wide range of behaviors in which children broker the relationship of family members with local institutions. This communication skill allows the family access to information and resources that were unavailable to them due to linguistic barriers. Language brokering programs in schools would be important in the development of the youth socially, academically and professionally in addition to providing networking opportunities for the future.

Educational policies should re-evaluate the initial academic goals of schools. Preparing students for productive futures is vital. The mission statement for our school systems and for our state's long term success must be to educate and prepare a highly skilled workforce to compete in the global economy. Success is achieved by recognizing these unique bilingual abilities and supporting these young language brokers academically. It would be a great disservice to the future children of California if the conventional wisdom of the past is continued.

Various studies and research demonstrate that students' academic achievement can be positively impacted by involvement in a young language brokering program (Angelelli et al., 2002; Borrero, 2006; Orellana, 2009). The goal of assisting students to succeed academically relies on the implementation of additional programs for these young bilingual students. In

addition, the potential economic benefits are significant. Not only would children acting as language brokers have future academic and professional prospects, but they would be facilitating their parents and others to sustain themselves as productive members of society. Society could benefit from the language brokering performed by young language brokers (Orellana, 2009) by enabling access to facilities not equipped to provide interpreting or translation services to language minorities (Angelelli, 2010b). These minorities, while disadvantaged in many regards, have an important impact in the overall economy of the U.S.

### **ECONOMICS OF LATINO EDUCATION**

Bilingual children who act as linguistic and cultural interpreters should be viewed as an asset to U.S. society, rather than a liability. The contributions of the Latino population to the State of California's economy are valuable. The Latino population provides and will continue to provide a significant number of employees to businesses. Investment into this linguistic ability through the means of education would provide long term benefits to the State (Checchi, 2006). Statistics show countries with high enrollment/graduation rates have grown faster than countries without (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007). Although education is not the only factor, investment in education indirectly generates economic growth. There is a strong correlation between formal educational achievement and productivity growth. Some economists believe that many skills and capabilities come by the way of learning outside of traditional education methodologies, or outside of schooling altogether (Kling & Merrifield, 2009) as seen in language brokers.

Education has played a vital role in the economic well-being of this country during the past five decades. However, the U.S. schooling system does not currently rank among the best educational systems in the world. Other countries such as Finland, South Korea, and Norway are considered to have better systems. For example, the Finnish educational philosophy is that every student has something to contribute to the classroom and society. Those students who struggle with certain subjects are not left behind or pulled-out of the classroom (Burridge, 2010). The goal of the Finnish educational system is to invest in youth development to replace an aging labor force. The Finnish government has recognized that the skilled labor force population is declining. There is a need to educate the youth to compete in a world-wide community. This Finnish acceptance of a declining skilled work

force parallels the current demographic trends with the generation of baby boomers in the U.S. The concept utilized in Finland, to educate and prepare a new workforce, is viewed as a long term investments, which can be copied by the U.S. An emphasis should be directed towards additional funding for school programs with a long term commitment to education.

The percentage of the population that has finished high school and earned Bachelor's degrees remains high; however, the growth in both categories has slowed down over the past two decades (Stoops, 2004). Nearly 85% of the population has a high school degree and 22% have earned a Bachelor's degree. The U.S. workforce today is one of the most educated in the world. However, the educational gains are declining due to growing demographic trends and failing educational policies. If these trends continue, the share of the U.S. workforce with high school and college degrees will begin to decrease (National Center for Public Policy & Higher Education, 2005). One reason for this decline is that as educated baby boomers retire, they will be replaced by increasing numbers of young immigrants, who at the current rate reported are far less likely to earn degrees.

The growing diversity of the U.S. population has been on an incline for the past three decades (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007). In the 1980's, the U.S. workforce was 82% Caucasian. By 2020, projections indicate it will be just 63%. Over this 40-year span, the population of minorities will double to 37%, with Latino workers tripling to 17% (National Center for Public Policy & Higher Education, 2005). The only concerning issue with these projections is that Latinos are less likely to earn degrees. Research finds that the many structural and socio-cultural barriers lead this group towards low academic achievement results and ultimately cause them to be less likely to earn degrees (Gándara, 2005). If the gap persists, the number of Americans age 26 to 64 who does not have a high school degree could soar from 7 million, to 31 million by 2020 (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2005).

Sorenson, Brewer, Carroll, and Bryton (1995) computed the economic benefits that would be realized due to increased levels of education in Latinos. They concluded that:

Hispanics with a bachelor's degree will pay more than twice as much in taxes as those with only a high school diploma, and Hispanics with a professional degree will pay an estimated three times as much as those with a bachelor's degree. (p.4)

Education increases the human capital in the labor force, which in turn increases the labor productivity and as a result leads to a higher equilibrium level of output in an economy (Mankiw, Romer, & Weil, 1992). Furthermore, individuals with a higher education tend to



have better health and lead longer and more productive lives (Perna & Swail, 1998). Overall, a higher education enriches both the individual and their surrounding community. Changes should be made to successfully educate California's 1.6 million ELL by providing teachers with the necessary tools, knowledge, and funding required to achieve the desired results.

### **REVIEW OF PROPOSED CURRICULUM AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE**

School is a place where many children of immigrants have continually struggled with language development; therefore, a language brokering program could foster the academic achievement of students. The focus would be on how their skills could be developed and fine-tuned towards future opportunities of advancement. Furthermore, the importance to establish more programs would be highlighted for the future growth of young bilinguals that can help create opportunities that build on establishing self-esteem and confidence in young language brokers and help improve communities.

In 2002, Angelelli and colleagues created a high school curriculum for young interpreters, also known as language brokers. They designed a program to nurture the talents of linguistically gifted bilingual students. The detailed guidelines proposed include the basic principles of interpreting and strategies students can use when performing as language brokers in the classroom. The monograph also claimed that students would learn to approach language studies in new ways that could be used in other classes and outside the classroom. Strategies and skills like note-taking, listening and public speaking could be taught in the curriculum. Another goal of this curriculum is the development of both languages by increasing vocabulary through trial situations where medical or legal terminology is listened to or read for practice. This would help students prepare for difficult situations when brokering and help them perform better under pressure.

The encouragement and acknowledgement of the students' bilingualism can help students see their capability as an asset (Orellana et al., 2003; Valdés et al., 2003). Their language brokering identity is grounded in their bilingual ability which is not accessible to or obtainable by everyone, making it a unique and a highly desirable skill. The goal of a language brokering program should be to embrace the exceptional skills that often stigmatize young bilinguals and their language (Borrero, 2006). Since these children often assist by performing translations and interpret for their parents (Valdés et al., 2003), the design would

be to connect these communicative events that are currently taking place with the students' identity and achievement. In doing so, a program would enhance the communication between English monolingual school personnel and Spanish monolingual parents.

Youth development is a combination of all of the people, places, supports, opportunities, and services that young people need to be happy, healthy, and successful. People, programs, and institutions involved in youth development should be working toward positive results in the lives of youth. An attempt needs to be made to promote more positive outcomes among the Latino population. These outcomes include, and are not limited to, the academic skills and competencies which are the focus of most schools.

Outcomes from a language brokering program can include a sense of structure, promotion of high self-worth and self-esteem, a sense of belonging to a group of students with similar talents and the awareness of the responsibility and independence that come with these skills. Teachers, administrators, and institutions who work with this young population might consider providing motivational, emotional, and strategic support to help students succeed in life. Support and encouragement is very powerful, especially from family members, community social networks, teachers, youth workers, employers, health providers, and peers who are involved in the lives of the students.

In addition, the program would offer opportunities to the students. These opportunities would provide chances for them to learn how to act in the world around them, to explore and express themselves, as well as earn respect and a sense of belonging while contributing to their communities. Opportunities give young people the chance to test ideas and behaviors and to experiment with different roles. It is important to stress that young people, just like adults, learn best through active participation and that learning occurs in all types of settings and situations.

A language brokering program would provide relevant instruction and training specific to their unique skills. Also, a program could offer appropriate information to help promote the training, preparation and guidance in the classroom. Bilingual students could learn more about their linguistic aptitude and develop these distinctive skills that they possess. The ultimate goal of these programs would be to help guide these students to recognize and seize the professional worth of translation and interpreting in their future. In

addition, by recognizing these students' linguistic abilities, it could lead to higher rates of high school completion and attendance to college as suggested by Valdés (2003).

### **SEIZING AN OPPORTUNITY: ESTABLISHING PROGRAMS FOR CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERS**

This thesis has described and analyzed the special and unique bilingual abilities of young language brokers. Although there is an ongoing debate regarding how language brokering can impact a child, the high level of cognitive, metalinguistic and academic achievement among this group of children is undeniable. Research (Borrero, 2006; Orellana, 2009; Valdés et al., 2003) has illustrated their ability to carry out complex information-processing tasks through translating and interpreting. The goal of this thesis has been to provide information and create awareness regarding young bilinguals in the context of language brokering. Fostering and developing the abilities of potentially linguistic and talented language brokers will require the establishment of new programs. Programs will be successful in schools where there is a commitment by administrators and educators to offer specially designed instruction for children whose talents and abilities may not be fully grasped yet.

Based on the research reviewed in Chapter 3 which focused on the cognitive, emotional, and developmental consequences of language brokering, it is reasonable to consider that these concerns could be addressed and resolved with the proper support of a language brokering program and well-trained educators. Unfortunately, since no programs currently exist in the context of language brokering, it is difficult to assume that this would be the outcome. However, with the research and pilot programs that have been conducted (Angelelli et al., 2002; Borrero, 2006; Orellana, 2009; Valdés et al., 2003), researchers can conclude that an encouraging and supportive program would be able to handle the concerns currently preoccupying opponents to child language brokering.

A program with the intention of nurturing language brokers should continue the development of both their native language and English proficiencies. Also, an option of a language brokering program should be a school-to-work program in translation and interpreting for language brokers. A school-to-work program is an education reform movement. A program like this could emphasize lifelong learning and include on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and cooperative education agreements for students (U.S.

Department of Education, 2010). Typically, school-to-work programs are designed to prepare students to enter the job market and encourage higher education advancement. This type of program would introduce the philosophy of connecting school activities with the community to expose students to future careers. A program would not have to exclusively support the career of an interpreter or translator, but could enhance the students' linguistic talent and develop skills that would be beneficial in any career. These skills include communication skills and professional etiquette.

In addition, having a job through a school-to-work program such as a language brokering program can be beneficial for a child and/or adolescent in terms of providing self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and a sense of independence (Mortimer, 2003). Furthermore the guidance of a program like this could promote an understanding of the balance between work and school and underscore the positive relationship between the two. At the same time, a program can minimize any interference with school performance or anything that may undermine the importance of receiving an education. Not only would young language brokers have future academic and professional prospects, but they would be facilitating communication for their parents and other members of their communities. Also, they will be contributing back to the community and sustain themselves as productive members of society. The entire society, whether it is a household, a school, a clinic or a business, benefits from the implementation of child language brokering program.

These school-based programs could work to meet the needs that language brokers cannot always find in their community or from their family members and enhance the learning experiences of students. Many factors play a role in the learning experience of students. A school, program or organization can help develop skills necessary to foster young bilinguals. A young language brokering program should work with its community members to fill-in the gaps that are missing from schools. They would complement one another and facilitate the acknowledgement, development and training of young language brokers. Their skills would be addressed by providing particular types of teaching and learning experiences for this specific and unique youth populations. A program would not be an alternative to formal education offered in the schools, rather a complement to their education which could prove essential for helping young bilinguals grow to optimal maturity and better serve their community.

## SUMMARY

Bilingual children who perform as young language brokers are talented and unique individuals. Young language brokers help members of their families and communities and benefit from their interpreting and translating experiences. Their gift should be recognized and embraced (Angelelli, 2010a, 2010b; Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). The emotional benefits that the young interpreters gain by helping their family or community members are great as are the benefits of self-esteem and confidence building. Being able to take on responsibilities of translators and interpreters are significant. As bilingual children and adolescents attempt to help monolinguals whose linguistic needs are not accommodated by our society it would be beneficial for them to receive positive attention in a classroom, be encouraged to speak two languages, and be assisted in improving their skills. That is why a curriculum or classes based on their skills and needs would promote and prolong their learning and most definitely benefit them and their community in the future (Angelelli et al., 2002).

This thesis increases the understanding and the reasons why young children and adolescents are translating and interpreting and assesses the role and impact that these young language brokers have in their families, community, and overall society. In addition, it exposes the need to break down the stereotypes surrounding the field of young bilinguals as language brokers, and instead focus on how their skills can be developed and fine-tuned into future opportunities of advancement. This thesis attempts to acknowledge the concerns that may come from language brokering as seen in Chapter 4, however, at the same time address how these issues can be approached and managed through the research of recent investigation presented in Chapter 6. Language brokering represents a path towards developing life-long bilingual and bicultural growth (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). This growth can improve an individual's marketability in a multilingual and multicultural society. Public education should not be viewed as an expense but rather as an investment in an educated workforce providing the best rate of return on investment. An educated workforce is essential to the economic vitality of a region.

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