

# REFLECTING ON PAST LANGUAGE BROKERING EXPERIENCES: HOW THEY AFFECT CHILDREN'S AND TEENAGERS' EMOTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

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# 1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

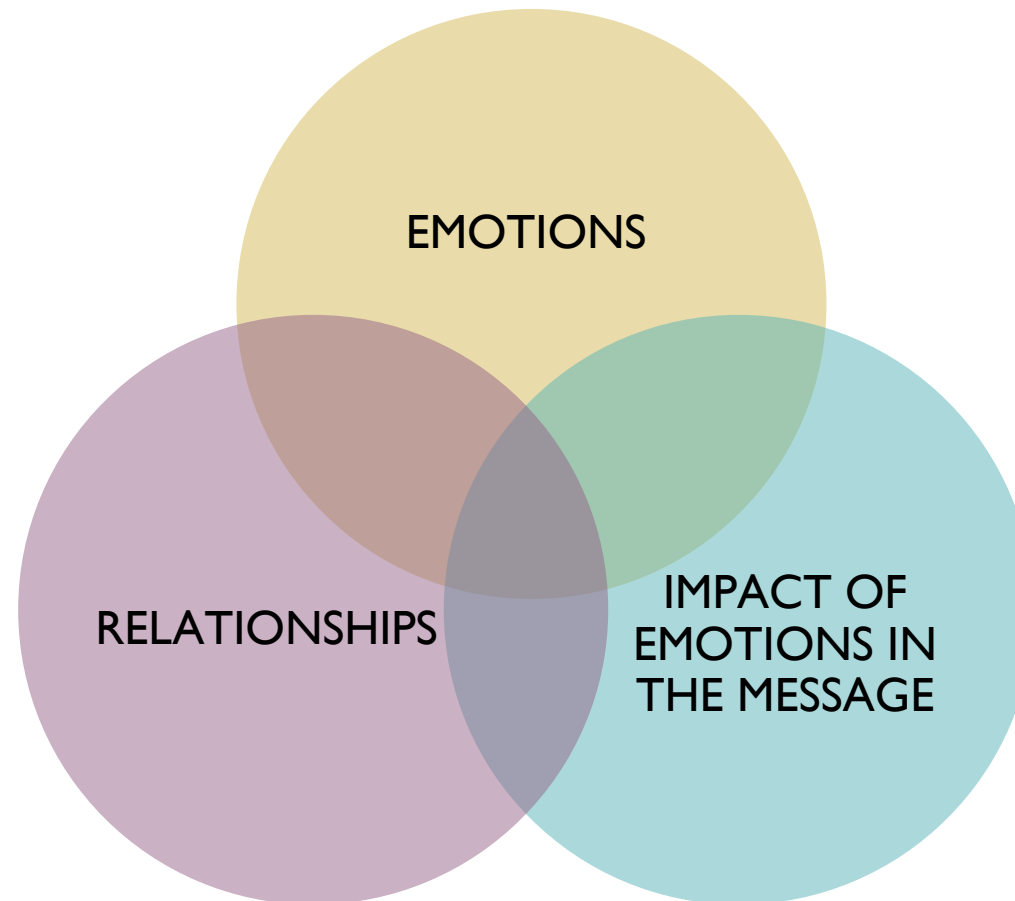
- **Part of a broader project** funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (RTI2018-098566-A-E00) **conducted by MIRAS research group.**
- **Main goals of the broader project:**
  - To **unveil a common practice** in public services and beyond in the province of Barcelona
  - To **raise awareness about it**
  - To **describe Child Language Brokering (CLB)** in the province of Barcelona considering various perspectives:
    - Child and young interpreters
    - Former child interpreters
    - Parents
    - Public services providers

## 2. FOCUS OF OUR STUDY

- Analysis of semistructured **interviews conducted to former child language brokers**
- 3 main questions:
  - How do young adults report they felt while acting as language brokers?
  - How were the relationships they established with their immediate context (family, teachers, their own community) shaped by the role they played as language brokers? What emotions emerged from that regarding the assessment of CLB?
  - How might the message that brokers render be modulated by the impact of particular emotions?

# 3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Confluence of **three topics**



# 3.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES- Emotions



- Not yet any consensus about CLB's emotional effects on brokers.
- First studies (Shannon, 1990; Tse, 1995) burden and embarrassment vs. proud, independent and mature.
- More recent literature - mix of positive and negative feelings:
  - + Responsibility for the families (Dorner et al., 2008); maturity (Dorner et al., 2008); empathy and self-esteem, felt good for being able to help others (Orellana & Phoenix, 2017); increased confidence thanks to their translation abilities (Dorner et al., 2007); higher academic achievement (Buriel et al, 1998; Angelleli 2016).
  - Burden (Wu & Kim, 2009); stress (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014); cultural stressor (Love & Buriel, 2007); higher levels of family stress, lower levels of parenting effectiveness, and poorer adolescent adjustment in terms of academic fulfilment and emotional health (Martinez et al., 2009); anxiety and depression (Chao 2006); nervous, scared, embarrassed, and worried about the perception of their parents by others (Orellana, 2003).

## 3.2. PREVIOUS STUDIES- Relationship and Modulation



- No consensus in the literature about the impact of CLB on relationships within families:
  - CLB can have a negative influence on family relations (Tse, 1996), or lead to adultification (Puig, 2002), or even to role reversal, which the literature has labelled as parentification (Suàrez-Orozco, 2012; Weisskirch, 2007).
  - + CLB reinforces the team-oriented relationship between parents and children, since they both collaborate to negotiate meaning (Dorner et al., 2008; Orellana, 2009)
- The relationships brokers have with their families have an impact on how they assess the experience (Buriel et al., 2006; Weisskirch, 2007; 2020)
- Not in literature an account on how relationships with teachers (they broke for) or their community may impact on their assessment of the experience.
- Not in literature either how emotions impact on how brokers may modulate the message.

## 4. METHOD- Data collection



Retrospective narratives about CLB through semi-structured interviews

- **Participant's profile:** 19 participants (17 women and 2 men) between 18 and 29
- **Data collection modes:** 14 online, 5 face to face, between 40 and 50 minutes



## 4. METHOD- Data analysis

Verbatim transcription:  
**20 hours**



Codification process  
with Atlas.ti:

- The codes created inductively
- And revised by two members of the team

# 5. RESULTS - Feelings, emotions

## POSITIVE EMOTIONS

PRIVILEGE	6
REWARD	6
HELP OTHERS	3
LEARNING EXPERIENCE	3
PRIDE	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21</b>

## NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

RESPONSIBILITY	28
SHAME AND EMBARRASSMENT	19
OBLIGATION	11
DISCOMFORT	5
GUILT	3
CONCERN	1
FRUSTRATION	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>68</b>

## 5. RESULTS - Feelings, emotions

**Meiling:** Really I'm still **proud** of myself, for having learnt the language so quickly, the **confidence** the people around me showed, that **they trusted me** and **asked me for help...** and I think that in that part, when I was acting as a translator, the doctor, for example, was also surprised **that a little girl could understand so many things and could speak so well.** Even now people tell me that I don't have... **that I speak Spanish very well, that I don't seem Chinese when I speak.**

## 5. RESULTS - Feelings, emotions

**Li:** I saw myself as more responsible, but it's a responsibility which forces you... you find it difficult... I was too small and I didn't think I should have to play this role, this role of translator, because I wasn't prepared. Because, as I went with my parents at the beginning, it wasn't just a translation task, transmitting information from one person to another, but I also received the information as the transmitter... because the role of a translator is to pass a message from the transmitter to the recipient, but on accompanying my parents it isn't just this, but rather I am also part of the recipient. So, there was a lot of pressure at 16 or 15 years old on being responsible for what they said...

# 5. RESULTS - Relationships

- **Relationship with parents:**

- + Stronger ties and developed a sense of empathy towards parents

- Dependence, Reprimanded (rejection) and role reversal:

- Li: before, in China... my family accompanied me to do many things... But after coming to Spain I realised that I had to accompany them to do many things. **That I had to confront many things for them, instead of them confronting them for me.** I think that **this shock is what I obtained above all through translating and interpreting,** because you have this shock of why you are here helping them instead of...Your parents have to help you, you know?

- **Relationship with teachers:** Only Positive reported: Pride, feeling of being trusted and valued by the teachers

- **Relationship with the community:**

- + Pride, awareness rising and strengthen the relationship and sense of belonging.

- Sense of imposed shared responsibility → don't have the tools to say no.

## 5. RESULTS-Emotions and message modulation

- 13 of the participants acknowledged they sometimes consciously did not translate what they were asked to translate → shame/sensitive information:

Farah: of course, me, for example, they also asked me “**when was the last time she had sexual relations?**” And I was like “how do I say that to my aunt?” when I was **10 years old...**

Researcher: Can you remember how you solved it, or not?

Farah: my aunt, with what I was trying to say to her... **She noticed that I couldn't even speak...** so she understood what I wanted to say. Maybe I said to her “**when were you with your husband?**” and with that she understood...

- 6 participants reported that in order to protect their own interest they would not translate/modulate the message

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

- The key role of emotions in CLB experience and the connection with the relationships.
- The importance of first-person retrospective narratives.
- Prevalence of reported negative feelings
  - Responsibility, shame, obligation
  - + Privilege, Reward
- The kind of relationship shapes how brokers assess the experience.
  - + Positive relationships → CLB perceived positively
  - Negative relationships → reject/negative evaluation
- Emotions and message modulation → being embarrassed or not being able to handle emotions.

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# THANK YOU!



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**MIRAS**

Mediació i Interpretació:  
Recerca en l'àmbit social