Brokering Literacies: Child Language Brokering in Mexican Immigrant Families

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Abstract

This article reports from instances of child language brokering among emergent bilingual youths and parents at a New York City after-school community literacy program composed largely of Mexican immigrant families. I argue that youth language brokers negotiated literacies with and for their parents in differing contexts, with different audiences, and under different dynamics of power relations. Young language brokers utilize bilingual practices to translate, interpret, and advise between adults and family members of different ages. Language brokers, I argue, use their bilingual learning to help their families and to show they care.

Keywords: language brokering, bilingual learning, immigrant families, family literacies

This article reports on five years of ethnographic research into the day-to-day instances of child language brokering among emergent bilingual youths and parents at a New York City after-school community literacy program composed largely of Mexican immigrant families. My research explores the languages and literacies of participant bilingual youth language brokers, bilingual mediators who communicate between monolingual adults. These youth language brokers negotiated meaning with and for their parents in differing contexts, with different audiences, and under different dynamics of power relations. The young language brokers utilized varying levels of bilingual practices to effectively increase translate, interpret, and advise between adults and family members of different ages. Bilingual brokers develop practices to navigate complex information in their family lives, which would never be fully evaluated in their schooling, but yet which schools would seem to expect or even demand in terms of family-involved literacy learning among "gifted" students (Valdés).

My research examines language brokering among mothers and children and the day-to-day literacy practices of children participating in the Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS) community literacy after-school program. The

MANOS language brokers involved and engaged monolingual Spanish dominant family members in their schooling lives, which were largely conducted in English. This positive aspect of language brokering, however, balanced with power differences that happen in bilingual exchanges. Language brokering collaborations sometimes produce conflicts from linguistic inequalities, which re-distribute intergenerational authority between parents and children. Depending on the contexts, being aware of these power differences can also be places for literacy researchers to recognize how bilingual parental collaborations with children happen in families. This last aspect adds to the learning of emergent bilingual students who come to understand the responsibilities of language brokers when communicating with diverse audiences, including educators.

Research in language brokering has examined the complex strategies of youth language brokers navigating audiences, languages, and literacies (Orellana; Orellana and García; Orellana and Reynolds; Orellana et al.; Weisskirch). This article adds to a line of ethnographic research into language brokering as saturated with conflicting authorities and social bridges between languages and cultures. As in previous research portraying children as social actors living in their existential present, and not as "adults in the making" (Corsaro 225), I speak directly with youth language brokers to consider how young people's understandings of their families, their educations, and their languages actively contribute to each as they see themselves in their everyday lives. In this article, the social values of non-standard, minoritized languages and literacy practices demonstrate how two youths felt about language brokering and its power in their families, particularly when translating to help their mothers in different contexts.

Language brokers occupy a unique position in communication. In *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture*, Marjorie Faulstich Orellana argues that youth language brokers mediate adult-to-adult conversations and often voice their concerns about the translated contents of both oral and written texts between different monolingual audiences. The MANOS children brokered for mothers around the neighborhood, but also in such tense circumstances as admission to emergency rooms, and interviews with counselors and lawyers. In one case, Sarita, the 17-year-old daughter of 38-year-old Guadalupe, brokered between her Spanish-speaking mother and the English-speaking teachers of her two younger brothers (in fourth and first grade), offering her mother more than mere translations; she provided Guadalupe analyses of situations and assumed the function of adviser when six-year-old Miguel was diagnosed with a speech impediment and required therapy appointments. Especially in matters relating to school and guarding her younger brothers, Sarita's bilingual abilities to shuttle across languages had increased her family stature in the eyes of Guadalupe. This sense of "role reversal" could misguidedly be seen as a result of when children socialize their parents, or become parents for their children. To understand such power dynamics in a more nuanced way, however, we must consider how language brokering becomes a way that children help their parents as a form of respect and familial duty.

To understand the potential social and academic benefits language brokering might have for children, we must also understand how translation functions beyond language and literacy into the lives of families. As Orellana contends, second-generation language brokers in families do not always see themselves as parents to their parents. Rather, language broker youth consider their translations and interpretations as contributions to the good of the family, as a way of demonstrating care. Young people help their family members with their language brokering, and in doing so, they enact social relationships between audiences. Language brokers meet where English and Spanish circulate and conflict in overlapping markets of cultural values, histories, and power. Language brokers are attuned in to this awareness in their day-to-day linguistic interactions, especially as they not only translate and interpret, but they often advise as well. These aspects of language brokering are important for educators to recognize, and they demonstrate the powerful tools that young language brokers utilize on a daily basis. As such, pedagogy inclusive to this feature of the home lives of millions of students underscores overlooked cultural, intellectual and linguistic strengths language brokers bring to classrooms across the nation.

Study Context: MANOS, the Mexican American Network of Students

This article draws from a larger research project into how English language acquisition and literacy transformed family relations and structured educational ambitions among tutors and MANOS families. Nine first-generation Mexican-origin immigrant families (9 mothers, 21 children) living in New York City were the focus of my study, all members of MANOS, a small, underfunded, self-sustained community literacy program, whose core of dedicated volunteers were also participants in this qualitative study. The grassroots MANOS offered free evening homework tutoring services three times a week, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. MANOS promoted active family involvement in schooling and positive views toward ethnolinguistic identity. The MANOS tutors varied in ages from 16 to late 50s. The majority, however, were young professionals in their twenties who volunteered once or twice a week, some all three evenings. Several tutors arrived to the program in their office clothes, and a few came from distant parts of other boroughs. Nearly all the tutors were second-generation Mexican Americans and first-generation college students. Several tutors were from different regions of the United States attending college in New York City. There was also a steady stream of local high school students and international university students from Mexico City who volunteered as tutors while earning community service hours to meet graduation requirements. All tutors spoke and wrote English, and some were more fluent in Spanish than others. For one tutor, Mandarin was her first language, Spanish her second, and English her third. Tutors who had the capacities to use Spanish when communicating with MANOS families did so. Children of parents also helped with language brokering duties to parents and young children who had little comprehension of English.

MANOS's mothers were the program's most important assets. In *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants,* Robert C. Smith argues that gender roles in the Mexican family division of labor point to the cultural responsibility of

education as within "female" spaces (97). By and large, the participation among children and tutors fell evenly between females and males, but among parents, there were more participant mothers than fathers at MANOS. At different times fathers also helped with homework, fundraising, and maintaining the space. By tutoring at MANOS, though, I learned about families through the interactions I had with mothers and children, as mothers were the primary regular caretakers I encountered. The MANOS mothers were exceptional in helping their children succeed in school, and they contributed to their children's educational needs in manners deemed fit and necessary for their children's well-being.

The data for my project was gathered primarily over a period of five years, beginning in early 2006, when I conducted my first round of family interviews in homes and at MANOS. These interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English with bilingual children and/or tutors serving as language brokers when possible. I digitally audio-recorded these interviews, as well as interactions with parents, children, and myself when working through homework, or when speaking, writing and/or reading at the MANOS center. Data consisted of digitally recaptured images of texts produced by MANOS children, parents, and tutors, photographs, as well as transcripts from interviews and tutoring sessions.

Using methods developed from my reading of Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities in Classrooms*, I initially coded audio-recorded homework tutorials involving tutors, parents, and children into different examples of language brokering as literacy events, searching for moments of translation as data for literacy as social practice. When examining instances of language brokering through the data, I problematized Heath's notions of literacy events as limited to monolingual conceptions of literacy brokering. I reconfigured, instead, literacy events in plurilingual dimensions, and in more recent research I have considered them as moments of "translanguaging events" reflecting the dynamic practices of individuals in bilingual contexts (Alvarez 326). In this article, I focus on such translanguaging events narrated as a vignette of a young person helping his mother during an exchange, and the reflection of another student when considering his history of language brokering for his mother as a form of family duty.

MANOS Serving Mexicanos in New York

The majority of my fieldwork occurred at the MANOS site, in the basement of a Catholic Church in one of New York City's outer boroughs, a space the church donated to MANOS for six hours each week. Historically, the neighborhood had been home to immigrant groups since the early nineteenth century. According to the Latino Data Project at the Graduate Center of the City of New York, in 2010, Mexicans composed 14.3% of New York City's total Latino population, with a growth rate of nearly 10% between 1990-2010 (4). At the time of this study, the neighborhood was one of New York City's "Little Mexico" immigrant barrios. Like several barrios in New York City, the Mexican community initially concentrated in the middle of a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood. Because of the racial diversity of New York City, the boroughs' "Little Mexicos" were often ethnically and

racially diverse, and they have emerged around areas with relatively recent Spanish-speaking migrants from Latin America.

The growth of New York City's Mexican immigrant community underscores the need for MANOS's services to the neighborhood. Yet, despite an enormous unmet need for educational services, MANOS struggled to continue because of lack of institutional support. The underfunded, grassroots organization had struggled year by year to secure a donated location, to recruit tutors, to pay for heat during the winters, and, generally, to provide sufficient services to its members. Despite these hardships, MANOS had persevered for nearly a decade through the sheer will of its volunteer tutors and its member families. Though MANOS remained essentially a small-scale, family-driven after-school program, a long-standing goal had continually been to change its shape through its leadership and achieving legitimate non-profit 501(c)(3) status. This goal had been seen as a work-in-progress. Although less structured than most funded after-school programs, among the numerous social organizations mobilized by Mexican immigrants in New York City, MANOS was recognized as an established program and had won several honors from New York City and State governments, as well as from various cultural organizations in the tristate area, for its services to New York's Mexican community.

Language Brokering: Linguistic Power in Families

The linguistic activities of brokering and being brokers tint all the exchanges of languages analyzed in this study. To language broker is to serve as liaison with influence in exchanges between individuals, to partake in an exchange as an active audience assuming creative or independent agency. According to Lucy Tse, language brokers "influence the content and nature of the message they convey, and ultimately affect the perceptions and decisions of the agents for whom they act" (180). Robert S. Weisskirch argues that during language brokering, "the authority position of the parent may be suppressed as the child or adolescent acts as the spokesperson for the family" (546). During such cases, Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco claim that children of immigrants can become "parentified" (74–5). Maria Elena Puig also terms this possibility of role reversal of children and parents as "adultification" in her sample of Cuban refugee families (85).

Without doubt, there were are instances when language brokering disrupts power dynamics among parents and children, but these repositionings are not stable, as no child wields consistent power over parents. How the relations fluctuate is only a matter of contexts and situations. Power reversals are both positive and negative effects of language brokering, but bilingual practices develop in the movement between languages in communication. When the MANOS youths assisted their parents with written and spoken English, there sometimes indeed was a family role reversal where children socialized parents through language brokering, but less in a way to treat their parents as children. When I asked different MANOS youths about translating for their parents, they described language brokering as something they owed their parents, on a level with keeping spaces clean and doing homework.

Several of the MANOS youths had reported to me they were sometimes precociously pushed by their translation responsibilities to assume adult-like authority in their families for the making of meaning and choices, especially when dealing in official genres like applications, disciplinary reports, parent notices, and school permission slips. The linguistic power these bilingual youths cultivated happened as they were compelled to grow up prematurely through translating both meanings and consequences of such official texts. Lisa M. Dorner et al. argue that "children take on a wide variety of translating tasks and that these require considerable linguistic, arithmetic, and social-cultural dexterity" (452). The researchers provide examples of bilingual youth who "explain their own or siblings' report cards to their parents, translate at doctor's offices and banks, make purchases at local drug stores, fill out credit card applications, screen phone calls from telemarketers, and translate movies and television shows for family and friends" (452). Added to this dimension of family responsibility, the sociocultural practices of language brokering are the extension into bilingualism as a valuable aspect of family life for immigrants. Without a doubt, this "parentified" sense of power happened through the reinforcement of the linguistic marketplace and the exchange value behind the acquisition of the dominant language. But the rewards of language brokering could also be redistributed to the family for its communal good. The scholars who argue that language brokering complicates parent-child protocols in immigrant families must take note that language brokering is not the sole cause of the breakdown of communication or language loss in immigrant families. Language brokering is a day-to-day activity, and it deserves pedagogical appreciation. Language brokering can be a tool to reach the literacies of families and to increase involvement and interest in language learning.

One possibility to approaching this as a pedagogical opportunity is to affirm the positive attributes recognizing children's voices, their "adultification," or by affirming the positive attributes of children's linguistic power, and giving greater appreciation to these skills in curricula. Lucy Tse reports that the Latino students in her sample described mixed positive and negative emotions with regards to their brokering, ranging from embarrassed and burdened to proud, independent, and mature (192). Marjorie Faulstich Orellana reports that adolescents in her studies demonstrated feelings of responsibility and power in their roles as language brokers for their parents (57). Curtis J. Jones and Edison J. Trickett recognize the potential value for the social act of brokering in immigrant families. Translating for their parents, they claim, indeed may prove stressful for youth, but that "such activities may, in principle, also be a source of family solidarity and an opportunity to increase self-efficacy and sense of importance" (409). MANOS youths also reported that serving as a language broker for their parents was a tedious, sometimes embarrassing event, but that it was also something useful to help their families.

Brokering English and Authority: Language Brokering and Family Duties

Increasingly, my fieldwork at MANOS revealed to me how immigrant parents who attended the grassroots community literacy program gave great weight to their

language brokering children's advice in normatively parental domains of family life. This was when situations become both moments for learning and also for questioning the influence of children in immigrant families, both as a situation for power disruption and also for acquisition of language skills. The shifts of power between generations I found, however, happened less intensely than as presented in language brokering and literacy research. This, however, did not mean that children were completely ruled by their parents, or that they ruled their parents, but, rather, they took pride in the power their English commanded, especially when they were able to use it to help their parents. Eleven-year-old Felipe Rubio (brother of Sarita, mentioned earlier) described a recent memory when he language brokered for his mother, 38-year-old Guadalupe,

> Like we went to a store and it's only me and my mom, and we talked to someone who didn't speak Spanish. And I said what they said to my mom, and I told the other person what my mom said, and helped both of the people. It made me feel like I know more Spanish. It felt like . . . like I helped my mom with something. It makes me feel proud, because I'm doing a good thing. I'm doing something good.

Felipe's language brokering completed the shopping transaction, and for Felipe, his involvement with adults made him feel like he knew more Spanish, or that he was putting his Spanish skills to test and performing well. Speaking between adults also endowed him with authority. Felipe noted that he felt he knew more Spanish, credited to his ability to translate difficult phrases or semantics from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. It certainly was a test of his bilingual repertoire in translating in the moment, but also of making sense between adults, and, as he said, "doing a good thing" by helping both people. It is telling that Felipe described the memory of his language brokering as "doing something good" to open the lines of communication.

When I asked Felipe if he had ever watched Guadalupe conduct herself in English in public without his help, he said "sometimes people can't hear her when she talks." Felipe credited this to his mother's "soft voice" in English. Guadalupe's voice in Spanish, though, he said, was "not soft." Felipe further clarified his statement about her English by saying that Guadalupe spoke "loud enough," but people couldn't hear her because of her accent, or that "they can't hear her like the way I do." Several MANOS students expressed similar feelings about these situations in the contact zones of asymmetrical power relations they encountered with their parents in public domains. Nevertheless, the sense of power, of "doing something good" to help his mother, empowered Felipe to think positive of his ability to language broker for the family, and as part of his family duty when called upon. For students like Felipe, activities to help build on this sense of positive association would increase comprehension of audience with bilingual activity.

When the MANOS language brokers assisted their parents in coping with English, the family "role reversal" was not a dramatic turn: children helped their parents and considered it as nothing more than helping out around the home or—

if outside the home—as helping with home matters that contribute to the overall well-being of home life in the family. The example of Felipe's memory of language brokering for his mother illustrated this. Felipe's language brokering for his mother permitted him not only to extend his emerging biliteracy and bilingualism to her, but also to understand the practicality of language uses in his family and his special place as facilitator. He gained responsibility in his family because he used his bilingualism as a service to his household. Orellana's extensive longitudinal research with language brokers speaks to similar strengths immigrant youth acquire as they overcome moving between languages and helping their families. In the next section, I offer a language brokering narrative of a son helping his mother in detail.

Language Brokers Negotiating Literacies and Languages

In this section, I offer a vignette from my fieldwork at MANOS demonstrating language brokering in the everyday practices of a mother and son communicating together for specific ends. The setting was a Cinco de Mayo celebration sponsored by a Latino student group at a local university and held outside the university library's quad. Several of the members of the student group were also MANOS tutors. Together with MANOS, the students organized an event to celebrate Mexican culture on campus. The MANOS families helped to organize the entertainment and food vendors. The results on the steps before the campus library were Mexican folklórico and Aztec performance dancers, mariachis, poetry, and plenty of food vendors—including a taco truck from the neighborhood. I was reminded of some of the Cinco de Mayo celebrations I used to attend growing up in Arizona—though nothing quite like this one experienced on a college campus in New York City.

Several MANOS mothers pooled money together to prepare large batches of tamales and tostadas to sell at the event. One mother, 31-year-old Juana, set up a beauty care products table. Her son, eleven-year-old Luis, helped her with the suitcase, and also with setting up the intricacies of the display, as if he had done so before. I approached them and asked them how they were.

Juana, always cheerful, said hello to me, and we shook hands. I shook hands with Luis next and said hello. I said it was nice to see him giving his mother a hand.

"Sí verdad, Luis es un buen ayudante a su mama" (Yes it's true, Luis is a good assistant to his mother).

"She said I help her."

Juana was pretty much always able to understand my English. I could say things to her in English, and she would usually respond in Spanish, but sometimes in English. She often would use MANOS tutoring sessions with her sons to practice her English. She also spoke a good deal of English in her work as a housecleaner in Manhattan. Juana had attended school up to the eighth grade in Puebla, Mexico, but as the oldest child, she claimed it was her duty to forgo further education to help financially support her younger siblings. First, she migrated to Mexico City working domestic jobs there, but eventually found her way to New York City. Through her financial support to her family, all of her younger siblings have completed high school, and one graduated with a degree in education from college. When her boys

Luis, and four-year-old Pablo were older, she hoped to complete her education, and eventually earn her college degree, before returning back to Mexico. Juana had begun selling cosmetics within the last six months as a way to earn some extra money working from home on weekends and some evenings. Her best customers were the mothers of MANOS, as well as the mothers at another after-school program just up the block from the program.

Juana and Luis both fielded and answered questions from interested browsers of her wares. I sat near them and observed Luis handle all the English language brokering duties for Juana, and how together they counted money and made change. One customer asked about the ingredients of some lotions, turning her attention between Juana and Luis. Juana held the bottle and read some of the ingredients, but then checked them with Luis, who read them, and then with the customer who read them. The customer made some comment about aloe content, which neither Juana nor Luis were sure about, but Luis pointed out that a different version of the lotion was very popular. He began in Spanish then corrected himself: "Claro—esta—señora—es muy rica: you must smell this—"

Luis then told the customer that there was no aloe in this type of lotion, but that his mother highly recommended it for its smell.

Juana said to Luis, "dile que lo pruebe" (tell her to try it). Juana gestured applying the lotion with her hands.

"You can try it, too. It smells very good," Luis said to the customer.

"Me gusta mucho este," said Juana.

"My mom says she likes this one a lot."

"Such a good sales team," the customer said with a smile, and she purchased the bottle of lotion.

The two made a solid team. After I asked Luis how he liked helping his mom with work. "It's fun because I can try to sell stuff and help my mom because sometimes she can't talk to the people who speak English, and I can talk to them to help her." For his effort, Juana gave a portion of each sale to her son.

Luis not only helped his mother with the transaction, but he also predicted how to approach his audience with practices he learned along with his mother. The move to smell the popular lotion was one Juana taught Luis, both explicitly and through practice with audiences she sold to in Spanish. During this day at the college, however, the sales team came into contact with a significant amount of English-speaking customers. For this reason, Luis's ability to negotiate languages and sales pitches became extremely important. Together, Juana and Luis did well to collaborate bilingually for the well-being of the family, but also for the caring togetherness of parent and child supporting one another.

From Theory to Practice: Schooling Values and Valuing Families

The setting for language brokering at MANOS involved bilingual youths mediating institutional and family literacy in a constellation of homework texts in Spanish and English, which in turn produced constellations of effects in their daily lives. The acts of language brokering in the case of the bilingual youths at MANOS were

bilingual contacts between institutional and familial languages. In facilitating this communication, the youths who gained the potential to feel empowered as language brokers in their families. Without assurance and mentorship, language broker youth might turn to the dominant language and internalize a perceived "lack" in the home literacies, imposing a type of self-censorship and relying less and less on the home language as a form of everyday communication. Over the course of another generation or two, this eventually results in home language loss among immigrant families. Future research into language brokering should probe deeper into how transitions between language dominance in immigrant families. Research in such cases must examine linguistic power dynamics over extended periods of time and into actions that reduce language loss over the second and third generations.

MANOS's community literacy program, for some parents in the neighborhood, served as a last and only resort to do something for their children. It also functioned as a protected site away from the schools, where parents aired their grievances with their children's' schools, where parents could learn about schools without having to interact with school officials who intimidated and embarrassed them for not speaking English. The ease of speaking in Spanish, of course, facilitated this most. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu examines linguistic exchange as an always already structured interaction whose form and content carry certain ascribed levels of value or distinction. According to this framework, differently valued forms of speech and writing structure the internalized forms of self-imposed censorship experienced at the human level. In the case of language brokering, youths redistribute the values of languages more equitably. There is power in this, and certainly when considering the power of immigrant families to communicate collectively.

For language-minoritized families, the standardized academic English literacy required by schooling necessarily entails language brokering and power inequalities. This ability to redistribute linguistic inequalities permits non-English individuals to broker linguistic capital in the linguistic marketplace, and I argue language brokers profit in a number of ways. Their possession of English in their families signifies Bourdieu's notion of *ethos* as "a sign of status intended to be evaluated and appreciated," a "sign of authority, intended to be believed and obeyed" (66). At other times, this caused pressure and sometimes emotional pain when children felt ashamed for their parents' nonstandard English accents. Sometimes this accounted for a rapid transition to English dominance in the second generation and eventual heritage language loss.

Teaching Strategies to Reach Language Brokers

Understanding the practices of bilingual students in their families is a necessary undertaking for all educators. Barely recognized or integrated into school-based language arts, the language brokering performed by youth language brokers has a community-based language function rewarded and cultivated only outside school. Lisa M. Dorner et al. find in their sample that "higher levels of language brokering were significantly linked to better scores on fifth- and sixth-grade standardized reading tests" (451). These translingual types of classroom practices can extend from

bilingual classrooms and into language arts in K-12, and even into university writing classes. Language brokering could be emphasized in schools with bilingual students as an untapped potential for empowering students and improving development of crafting voice in writing. Of course, more research must be performed to determine fully which aspects language brokering improves and how standardized testing scores intersect with specific aspects of the literacy activity. As it stands, however, language brokering and translation happen every day for immigrant families, and not as something learned by students for a test. School tests, however, do constantly remind students learning English about the social relations between their home languages and those preferred by institutions. For example, the MANOS youths learned about the social relations between Spanish and English within New York City, and their accents among the seas of those around them. MANOS youth language brokers also observed how their parents' nonstandard English accents marked them as immigrants in the U.S. mainstream. This proved to be a difficult issue for some to fully comprehend, and they sometimes leveled blame at their parents for their Spanish dominance. MANOS students had acute ears for accents in English and Spanish, and as material for study, language brokers would no doubt demonstrate higher levels of comprehension for registers of voices. In this sense, this very important translanguaging activity deserves further invitation into school curricula. Until then, however, it is important to examine language brokering as it happens in communities of practice. In terms of intersections of life and study, ethnographic projects exploring student communities, languages, accents, and literacies encapsulate methods for students to discover data from their experiences for analysis.

There are a number of immediate and structural ways schools can tap into the potential of language brokers in classrooms and pedagogy. For the sake of immediacy, I offer two pedagogical outlines instructors could employ right away in language arts classrooms. These methods seek to utilize and promote students' bilingualism and biliteracies in their classrooms as sources for study, and to increase student engagement in conducting self-led research community projects that seek to sustain bilingual practices rather than assimilate monolingual assumptions about language standardization.

Educators should acknowledge the academic potential for studying translation and student autobiographies of spoken and written registers. Writing courses at all levels stand to gain by incorporating ethnography and autoethnography projects that take students into communities to conduct field research. Students' interviews should be transcribed with attention to accents and translations when necessary. *On Ethnography: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research* by Shirley Brice Heath and Brian J. Street offers an excellent primer to conducting student research projects studying literacies and learning. To further gain social perspectives, ethnographic projects should involve groups of students from different backgrounds each taking part in researching the homes and languages of classmates for writing. In such shared projects, students conduct fieldwork and write about the lived experiences of communities. They practice critical thinking skills applied to researching their lives and their rich, experiences. The results are relevant writing projects rooted in students' real lives.

Student-teachers in this model would develop their own educational skills by using ethnographic fieldwork, from which they derive the themes and words of special consequence to the targeted population. Ethnographic methods research can tap into pedagogical value of local language uses and theoretical rigor. For future instructors, ethnography is clearly a valuable learning tool. From a critical point of view, student researchers would come to note how dominant and minority languages interact through the bilingual practices of agents moving between languages, especially at the family level, but also in communities. Speculations into how power dynamics function between children's and adults' access to—and possession of—the dominant literacy would necessarily extend the scope of teacher training to examine how and why families sharing a common situation coalesce to address their interests and needs. This would also offer important insight to future instructors about the strengths students and their families bring to classrooms, complicating a one-dimensional stereotype of low-income immigrants as dependent vessels of deficits needing to be filled with the so-called "official" language.

At the moment, it is important to first understand that language brokering is a phenomena resulting from a variety of historical and social factors, but that it has occurred for thousands of years, as long as cultures have migrated across the globe. Language brokering is an everyday literacy practice, but one that in the United States gets relegated to outside classrooms. Encouraging language brokering inside classrooms is the beginning to recognizing it as a tool for student involvement and multicultural interest. As multilingualism and globalization continue to shape one another, all students will develop multilingual proficiencies. To begin now, however, teachers can begin by inviting language brokering into lessons. For example, teachers requesting translations from different languages into English from other languages during class lectures is a way to empower emergent bilingual students to speak, and with the authority of another language. Language brokering highlights student translation in context with conversations at hand, but it also lends esteem to the academic ability to speak of certain subjects in the classroom in languages not English.

In addition, activities that could require translation assurance, as in bilingual versions of poems, also can be places where instructors can ask students experienced as language brokers to further engage in class. When using media for analysis, finding those with subtitles in different languages can also invite participation from language brokers. Looking at examples of commercials from other parts of the world can become fruitful material for rhetorical analysis in a defamiliarized linguistic context. Students familiar with the language and culture in foreign commercials can become sources of authority for fielding questions from students and teachers. Questions of cultural difference could be researched into topics of comparative political or cultural issues.

Analysts and educators would serve this diverse society well by penetrating "smokescreens" attempting to segregate languages through politics, a project the linguist Ana Celia Zentella described two decades ago as teaching and learning from sociolinguistic inequalities. Zentella argues that the "language smokescreen that obscures ideological, structural, and political impediments to equity" can be used to examine the macro picture of Spanish as a historically thriving language in the United

States (9). The anthro-political perspective—as Zentella terms it—is strongly allied with the precepts of critical or applied anthropology, as well as with critical discourse analysis and a Freirean pedagogy of empowerment from the grassroots. Following the anthro-political motivations for scholarly research set forth by Zentella, one hope for my research is to open teachers and parents to the existence of multiple routes to bilingualism, biliteracy, and language education.

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