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# Communication in Child Language Brokering: Role Expectation and Role Performance

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## Abstract

Child Language Brokering (CLB) refers to the mediation and translation activities performed by bi/multilingual children and adolescents for their peers, family members, and/or other people belonging to their linguistic community who may not be proficient enough to communicate in the societal language. Since child language brokers (CLBs) engage in interpreted communicative events and implement communicative strategies, one interesting but also controversial area of CLB is the communicative role children play and the expectations of other parties about that role. In this paper we examine frequent communication strategies implemented by a child language broker and study if/how they meet the other parties' expectations. Specifically, two child language brokering strategies are examined: replacement of a monolingual interlocutor and summarizing of the monolingual interlocutors' statements. We also discuss child language brokers' roles and their alignment with adults' expectations, an innovative focus that merits deeper discussion.

**Keywords:** childhood studies; child-language brokering; ad-hoc interpreting; role expectation; role performance

## 1. Introduction

Child Language Brokering (CLB) refers to the mediation and language translation activities performed by bi/multilingual children and adolescents for their peers, family members, and/or other people belonging to their linguistic community who may not be proficient enough to communicate in the local language. CLB is a field of inquiry in its own right. From initial field observations (Harris and Sherwood, 1978) to more structured empirical research projects (Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli, 2000; Weisskirch, 2017), interest in CLB has been increasing as evident in the increase in research funding allocated to specific projects (e.g., Arts and Humanities Research Council “Translating Cultures” in the United Kingdom (2014–17), The National Research Centre on the Gifted and Talented “Identifying, teaching and assessing the gifted through cultural lenses” in the US (1996–2000), as well as in the conferences devoting strands to CLB (e.g., the bi-annual International Conference in Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation celebrated in Cyprus (2023), Amsterdam (2021), Stellenbosch (2018), Winterthur (2016), Germersheim (2014), and Bologna (2012) and in the number of publications (Angelelli, 2010, 2016; Antonini et al., 2017; Ceccoli, 2022; Evrin and Meyer, 2016; Napier 2021; Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli, 2000; Valdés et. al., 2003).

Research carried out so far has shed light on the pivotal role that child language brokers (CLBs) play in interlinguistic/cultural communication, including CLBs' contributions to their own family's acculturation process (Angelelli, 2016; Chao, 2006; Martinez, 2006; Valdés et. al., 2003; Weisskirch and Alva, 2002; Weisskirch, 2013), the impact of their role on the relationships within the family (Cline et al., 2017; Martinez et al., 2009, Orellana et al., 2003, Napier 2016), and the socio-emotional and cognitive development of the CLBs themselves (Ceccoli, 2021; Dorner et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2018; Tomasi and Narchal, 2020, Napier 2021). Little attention, however, has been given to CLBs' and adults' expectations regarding their respective roles within the interpreted communicative event, especially when the adults and children involved are not family members.

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<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this article was originally collected by Ceccoli during her doctoral thesis entitled *A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Child Language Brokering: Attitudes, Perception of Self and Interactional Contributions*. University of Bologna, Italy.

In this paper we observe authentic communication and brokering strategies implemented by a child language broker and their alignment with the other parties' expectations (i.e., the adults' expectations). Specifically, we focus on two CLB strategies: 1) replacement of a monolingual interlocutor (Angelelli, 2004: 78), and 2) summarizing of the monolingual interlocutors' statements (Wadensjö 1998: 107). By examining CLBs' strategies, we can highlight the roles CLBs take on and their (mis)alignment with adults' expectations regarding the enactment of such a role, an area that merits deeper discussion.

## ***2. An interdisciplinary theoretical framework: from Grice's maxims of communication to childhood studies***

We approach the study of CLB from an interdisciplinary perspective using lenses from Pragmatics and Childhood Studies, as they apply to conversations and communication in which CLBs participate. Pragmatics (Grice, 1975; Ehninger, 1977) informs our research and allows us to see how CLBs mediate communication in an interpreted communicative event (Angelelli, 2000, based on Hymes, 1974). An interpreted communicative event implies a form of interpersonal communication (Kam and Lazarevic, 2014) governed by the rules of communication. One of the two rules of communication advanced by Ehninger (1977: 157) asserts that when people talk with others, they say only what they know or believe to be relevant to the other parties. This is also in line with Grice's principles of communication (1975) which, although developed for communication in English, one could argue are applicable to communication using other languages. These principles relate to the quantity, quality, relation and manner of information exchanged in a conversation. Applying Grice's principles of brevity, clarity and relevancy to the data observed sheds light on CLBs' performance and the strategies they use when facilitating communication. By assessing communicative situations and information flow, children, like adults, may make decisions based on what they perceive as necessary or relevant for the communicative goal of the interpreted communicative event. In so doing, CLBs broker by adopting the communication strategies they deem most effective and, consequently, meeting, with various degrees of success, adults' expectations of how CLBs should perform.

CLB involves the active presence of children. In order to fully examine and appreciate children's contribution to the interaction, we draw on Childhood Studies (Morrow, 1996) and consider CLBs competent as well as contributing social actors (Mayall, 2000). In addition, we conceptualize childhood, as well as the practice of CLB, as socially constructed. A social construction is based on "a theoretical perspective that explores the ways in which 'reality' is negotiated in everyday life through people's interactions and through sets of discourses" (James and James, 2008, 122). Underpinning this idea is the perspective that individuals, including children, are involved in the construction of everyday life and meaning through their actions. Children's entitlement to participate in social, cultural and political life is also highlighted in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989). Among the rights included by the UNCRC is the right to participation, which allows children to be respected as active members within their families and communities and to be considered as being responsible and engaged. This participatory role of children also enhances children's agency, understood as the capacity of individuals both to shape their own lives and to influence their social contexts (Baraldi and Iervese, 2014). In this study, we observe CLBs as agents who actively participate in the interactions in which they broker.

Pragmatics and Childhood Studies provide a useful understanding of how migrant families rely on CLBs while working as a performance team (Valdés et. al., 2003) in which the responsibilities of care-taking are distributed among all the family members, children included. CLBs care for their family members by helping them communicate with the local community. They are the link to the host society. They take part in the "caregiving continuum" by providing communicative support (Bauer, 2017) and by taking up active roles that impact the interaction they broker. In our study, the person in need of care is not a family member and neither are the adults requesting the child language

broker's help. We will thus show how the concept of "performance team" can also be valid when non-family members are involved in the brokered event.

### **3. Review of relevant literature**

#### **3.1 Fluidity of CLBs' roles: spotlight on their communicative role**

As mentioned above, examining CLBs through the new sociology of childhood (Qvortrup, 1994) means conceptualizing children as competent and contributing social actors (Mayall, 2000). This becomes evident by observing the different roles CLBs take on and the commitment they show both toward their families and the other people they broker for. CLBs help their families access their fair share of services when societies do not provide language mediation, and they support others (not necessarily family members) in their communication by using the skills they have (e.g., paraphrasing). They also interact as autonomous active players performing social acts (Angelelli, 2000). Interestingly, these different roles may vary over the course of a single child language brokered communicative event.

The activities performed by CLBs for their family members have been classified under three main roles: a) "tutors," when they act as both translators and teachers for their family members; b) "advocates," when they support their families during difficult transactions or situations; and c) "surrogate parents," when they take on parent like activities (Valenzuela 1999, 728-729). In addition, a large body of research (Jones and Trickett, 2005; Morales and Hanson, 2005) has examined the comprehensive roles and multiple tasks involved in CLB, focusing on: 1) CLBs' contribution to the acculturation and integration process of the whole immigrant family (Orellana, 2003; Weisskirch and Alva, 2002, Valdés et al. 2003); 2) the cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional and developmental effects of the practice (Angelelli, 2016; Dorner et al., 2008; Valdés et al., 2003); and 3) family dynamics (Love and Buriel, 2007; Weisskirch, 2007).

Given CLBs' engagement in communicative events, empirical studies have also focused on the communicative roles and brokering strategies adopted by CLBs. The majority of these studies are from the USA (Orellana et al., 2003, 2012; Perry, 2009, 2014; Reynolds and Orellana, 2009, 2014, Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli, 2000) and Europe (Ceccoli, 2020, 2022; García-Sánchez, 2010; Napier, 2021; Pugliese, 2017; Rossato, 2019). The results obtained have highlighted that CLBs were able to successfully convey the main communicative goals of the monolingual participants by using flawed, albeit functional, English (Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli, 2000). Hence, the potential and need to nurture bilinguals' linguistic and cognitive abilities through specific relevant classes or programs on language brokering (Angelelli, Enright, and Valdés, 2002). CLBs also acted as proactive participants and made a significant contribution to the achievement of the communication they brokered (Ceccoli, 2022). In particular, three conversational moves displayed their active participation and agency: the use of anticipation, repetition and repair (Ceccoli, 2020). These moves showed that CLBs are as engaged in the process of constructing conversational meaning as the other participants, and that their interactional contribution is essential in reaching mutual understanding (Valdés, 2003). Additionally, shifts in the learning and teaching roles taken on by CLBs were found to correspond with the shifting of domains of expertise of parents and children (Eksner and Orellana, 2012). Parents monitor the CLB activity and provide support and scaffolding, CLBs implement linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies, and the parent and the child co-construct the meaning.

#### **3.2 Adults' expectations about CLB**

CLB is a complex form of communication that involves the presence of three parties: the child language broker and, very often, two adults (their parents and the local officials/service providers) who need to communicate. Child language brokers' attitudes have been examined by implementing different methods, including questionnaires (Angelelli, 2017, Cirillo, 2017; Kim et al., 2014; Weisskirch, 2006, 2017), interviews (Angelelli, 2016; Ceccoli, 2020; Guske, 2008), drawings & narratives (Antonini et al., 2017; Cline et al., 2011), and direct observations (Orellana, 2009, Valdés

et al., 2003). Adults' perspectives about CLB, on the contrary, have received less attention, in particular if we consider the point of view of local officials and institutions.

Some studies have focused on parents' attitudes about CLB (Ceccoli, 2019; Corona et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2009). The results showed that CLB may facilitate the creation of a stronger relationship between parents and children who start to work together for their common survival. They act as a performance team, where adults keep their parental role (especially using facial expressions or gestures) while their children broker (Valdés, Chávez and Angelelli, 2000; Valdés et al., 2003). In addition to studying the performance team, some studies have also explored role reversal (Martinez et al., 2009), a phenomenon that stresses the parental authority taken on by children. Additionally, studies on parentification (Weisskirch, 2007; Peris et al., 2008) or adultification (Trickett and Jones, 2007) have focused on the emotional and behavioral responsibilities children have toward their parents. Martinez et al. (2009: 73), for example, suggested that CLB may cause parents to lose their authority, thus becoming "less influential in their role with their children." This reduced parental power could lead to a role-reversal between adults and children, resulting in family conflicts and negative experiences for child language brokers, such as greater exposure to stressful situations (Valenzuela, 1999; Weisskirch and Alva, 2002).

The point of view of local officials or service providers who have experienced CLB (e.g., teachers, educators, doctors, etc.) remains understudied. In the healthcare setting, studies have focused on doctors' points of view on CLB during doctor-patient meetings. Providers appear to accept their reliance on CLBs in consultations they consider linear (Cohen et al., 1999), i.e., when patients complain about common diseases such as a sore throat or back pain. The reason is that linear issues are easier to identify, diagnose and can be described by using simple statements. During more complex consultations, doctors oppose the presence of CLBs, since the risk posed by translation/rendition mistakes is higher (Free et al., 2003), and CLBs could be involved in topics that are not suitable for their age (Cirillo, 2014). When asked about their perceptions of the renditions performed by CLBs, healthcare professionals stated that they were satisfied with CLBs (Cirillo et al., 2010).

In school settings, teachers and instructors generally reported feeling comfortable in asking CLBs for help (Cline, Crafter, Prokopiou, 2014) and highlighted the important role of CLBs in integrating newly arrived classmates as well as in promoting positive values such as collaboration and mutual help (Rossato, 2014). In spite of these positive perceptions, teachers also stressed their concerns over difficulties CLBs might face when dealing with complex terminology and psychological-relational issues (Cirillo, 2017).

All the studies investigating adults' perceptions (parents and public officials/service providers alike) focused mainly on their attitudes toward the appropriateness of the practice and their feelings about it, rather than the adults' perceptions and expectations about the role and strategies adopted by CLBs. In addition, the studies discussed above (except for Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli, 2000, and Valdés et al., 2003) have mostly explored perceptions through questionnaires and interviews rather than through ethnographic data.

#### **4. The study**

The larger study, from which these excerpts are taken, was conducted at the "Welcome Youth Center," an after-school center in Forlì, Italy, over the course of nine months (Ceccoli, 2022). In line with the ethnographic approach of the study, all CLB activities occurring at this center were observed, audio recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

##### **4.1 Ethical considerations over collecting data with minors**

Ethical approval was pursued and obtained to conduct the larger study from which the data presented here was collected. The researcher explained the research project in detail to both educators and the families attending the Center during private meetings. A consent form to participate in the original study was signed by the participating Italian educators working in the center, by the parents

of the children, and by the children themselves. The majority of the recordings collected are from meetings arranged between the Italian educators and the parents to enroll their children in the after-school activities organized by the Center. In addition, other CLB interactions needed in different situations (e.g., CLB as peer teaching when students were doing their homework; or CLB to allow communication between one student and the educators or the educators and parents) were recorded, one of which is the object of the present study.

#### 4.2 *The site*

The Welcome Youth Center is an educational center run by a non-profit association that organizes after-school activities for migrant students between the ages of 6 and 14. The students come from different areas of the world, and so the population is diverse. The most common nationalities in the Center are Chinese, Moroccan, and Bangladeshi. For primary school students, the center is open from 2:30 pm to 6 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. For middle-school students on Tuesdays. At the center, the students receive help in doing their homework from 2:30 pm to 4 pm. They then have a thirty-minute break. From 4:30 pm to 6 pm they do some laboratory and group activities focused on specific topics (e.g., they learn to create new things by using recycled materials).

#### 4.3 *Contextual information of our study of role expectations and role materializations*

In this study we look at two adult educators and two children at the Welcome Youth Center. We observe the adults and the children in conversation and the distinct roles they have within the center. Traditionally, the adults care and are responsible for the children whom they teach, help and support. In their job, they know exactly what their role is, what they can expect from children, and what children can expect from them. The educators working at the center know well all the children enrolled as well as their families.

The adult educators are responsible for the children who go to the center to learn, interact, and play. Children know the adults are there for them and that they are reliable. The children's parents trust the adults in the center with the care of their children, and they trust their judgments. For the educators, part of knowing the children really well means knowing them as human beings, beyond their academic performance; knowing their family members, where they live, what languages are used at home, among other relevant information.

Because the center attracts youngsters from diverse cultural backgrounds, the educators often have to communicate with family members or children who do not speak Italian. At such times, professional language mediators may not be available.<sup>2</sup> And so, they rely on the help of other children who speak both Italian and the heritage language of the migrant person with whom they need to communicate. On these occasions, what we observe is a change of roles, since the children who help the communication tend to make some decisions related to the interaction. Such a position clearly shows children's participation in communication systems as well as children's agency (Baraldi, 2014), which is not usually observed outside a child language brokered communicative event.

#### 4.4 *The participants*

The interaction discussed in this paper involves four participants. We use pseudonyms when we refer to them to protect their identity. They are two Italian educators, Anna and Emma, and two eight-year-old students. One student is a Chinese girl, Liling, who has been attending the after-school activities since the beginning of the school year. She speaks Italian quite well and performs as a language broker when invited to help with communication. The other student is a Chinese boy, Hu. At the time the study was conducted, he has just moved to Italy from China and spoke little Italian. Hu is sick at the moment. As the Italian educators do not speak Chinese, they turn to Liling for help.

#### 4.5 *Data transcription and coding*

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<sup>2</sup> We report the terminology used by the participants in the study. In our site participants referred to a professional language mediator as a person paid to perform language mediation.

The interaction was transcribed observing conversation analysis conventions (Jefferson, 1974, Appendix 1). The turns uttered in Chinese were transcribed and then translated by professional translators into English. The same procedure was used for the turns spoken in Italian. Regarding the translation, an effort was made to convey the register and style of the source, and to reflect discursive elements such as hesitations, false starts and other types of hedging. The translation into English is presented in italics under the source utterance. The transcription mode applied includes a verbatim record of what the speakers said. No details about the pronunciation of their speech is included. The participants' names were changed to pseudonyms.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Contextual information

The excerpts we discuss and analyze are from an interaction that takes place at the Welcome Youth Center on a Wednesday afternoon. The researchers listened to the recordings and examined the data separately, then they came together to discuss, challenge and validate their respective interpretations. The excerpts presented below show some typical conversational behaviors observed among the CLBs and the Italian educators when interacting at the Welcome Youth Center.

While the primary school migrant students are doing their homework assisted by the Italian educators, one of them, Hu, feels sick. As the two Italian educators do not speak Chinese, they ask another student, Liling, to help them communicate with Hu, the sick child, since he speaks little Italian. We examine how Liling, who acts as a child language broker, responds to the request to help the two Italian educators (Anna and Emma) to communicate with Hu. In our analysis, we focus on two of the brokering strategies adopted by the child language broker to fulfill the communicative goal of the interaction: replacing the monolingual interlocutor and summarizing the monolingual interlocutor's turn (Angelelli, 2004: 78 and Wadensjö, 1998:107).

### 5.2 Replacing a monolingual interlocutor: when Liling replaces Hu

In Excerpt 1 below, Liling has been called by the two Italian educators Anna and Emma to help them communicate with Hu, who is feeling sick. They need to measure his temperature and to give him instructions on how to use the thermometer. The reader joins the conversation when Emma has just asked Hu to pull his t-shirt up. Liling does not broker Emma's turns into Chinese to Hu, rather she replaces Hu by answering the educator's questions in his place.

ANNA: Italian educator 1

EMMA: Italian educator 2

HU: Sick Chinese child

LILING: Child language broker

#### Excerpt 1

- |     |        |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 1   | EMMA   | così noi (.) ti misuriamo la febbre<br><i>so we (.) can take your temperature</i>   |
| 2   | LILING | 他说叫你能不能把外套脱掉(.) 然后他量一下你有没有发烧<br><i>she said to ask if you can take off your jacket (.) and then she takes your temperature</i><br>(2.0) |
| 3   | EMMA   | e che questo (.) deve stare SOTTO l'ascella<br><i>and this (.) must be placed UNDER his armpit</i>                                      |
| → 4 | LILING | lo sa<br><i>he knows</i>  |
| → 5 | EMMA   | lo sa?<br><i>does he know?</i>  |
| 6   | ANNA   | perché è un termometro per misurare la febbre l'ha già fatto? (1.0)   |

- glielo puoi chiedere?  
*because it's a thermometer to take his temperature has he already used it? (1.0) can you ask him?*
- 7 LILING mi sa di sì  
*i think so*
- 8 ANNA prova a chiederglielo (2.0) prova a chiederglielo  
*try to ask him (2.0) try to ask him (1.0)*
- 9 EMMA aspetta Hu (.) su la testa (2.0) qui  
*wait Hu (.) move your head up (2.0) here*
- 10 ANNA chiedi se l'ha già fatto  
*ask him if he has already used it (1,0)*
- 11 LILING 你有没有弄过啊?  
*have you already used it?*

Liling brokers the information given by the Italian educator to Hu in Chinese (turn 2). However, in turn 4, Liling replies directly to the Italian educator without brokering the educator's instructions to Hu. Emma is skeptical about Liling's immediate answer (turn 5), and so is Anna, who invites Liling to tell Hu what they have just said (turn 6). Once again, instead of following the Italian educator's invitation to broker communication, Liling replaces Hu as she takes the turn to produce her own answer ("I think so," turn 7). In both instances, turns 4 and 7, Liling takes the turn to produce an autonomous utterance and replaces Hu by speaking on his behalf. Anna, however, is not satisfied with Liling's communicative behavior and invites her to broker again (turn 10).

In this excerpt, Liling does not communicate to Hu the instruction given by Emma in turn 3. Instead, Liling replaces Hu twice by saying directly to Emma that Hu already knows where a thermometer should be put and how to use it. This interactional behavior may be led by Liling's assumption that Hu already knows how to use a thermometer, and therefore she thinks that brokering is not relevant. Unaware of what the role she is being asked to perform entails, Liling participates in the interaction and shares her own view without brokering. The Italian educators, however, not wanting Liling to assume what Hu knows or does not know, opt to verify Hu's knowledge first-hand. As a result, they gently direct Liling to broker (turns 5, 6, and 8) and get an answer from Hu.

From subsequent conversations with the Italian educators we learned that, based on their previous experience of working with other trained culture and language mediators, both have an expectation about how Liling should act. They expect Liling to broker, to know how to do it and not to assume Hu's answers. A mismatch between Liling's and Anna and Emma's expectations can be observed. When the educators realize their expectations of brokering are not being met, they gently guide Liling to broker. Turn 11 shows that they finally succeed as Liling does what they request and, in so doing, meets their expectation.

### 5.3 Replacing a monolingual interlocutor: when Liling replaces Anna

In Excerpt 2, Anna tells Hu that she has to call his mother so that she can pick him up to take him home because of his high temperature. Anna knows Hu's family: his father, mother and sister. She knows that it is usually Hu's mother who picks him up from the center in the afternoon. For this reason, Anna mentions Hu's mother as the person to call to take him home. We join the conversation when Anna explains the plan to Liling.

#### Excerpt 2

- 43 ANNA noi adesso dobbiamo chiamare a casa: (.) per avvisare la sua mamma  
 (.) che lo deve mettere a letto (.) perché non può neanche andare a scuola con la febbre così alta



- now we have to call home: (.) to inform his mother (.) who should put him into bed (.) because he can't even go to school with such a high temperature*
- 44 LILING 你妈妈在家吗?  
ni ma ma zai jia ma?  
*is your mum at home?*
- 45 HU 我爸爸在家  
wo ba zai jia  
*my dad is at home*
- 46 LILING ha detto: che la sua mamma: non è a casa però: c'è  
il suo babbo  
*he said: that his mum: isn't at home but: his dad is at home*
- 47 ANNA possiamo chiamare papà?  
*can we call dad?*
- 48 LILING 说能不能叫你爸爸过来接你(.)因为你现在这种态度(.)是不能在这  
的  
shuo neng bu neng jiao ni ba ba guo lai jie ni (.) yin wei ni xian zai  
zhe zhong tai du(.)shi bu neng zai zhe li xie de  
*She's asking if she can call your dad to pick you up (.) because with  
the temperature (.) you can't stay here and write*
- 49 ANNA c'è sua sorella che lo può venire a prendere?  
*can his sister come and pick him up?*
- 50 LILING 你有姐姐吗?  
ni you jie jie ma?  
*do you have a sister?*
- 51 HU 有。  
you  
yes
- 52 LILING 几岁?  
ji sui?  
*how old is she?*
- 53 HU 我姐十二岁  
wo jie shi er sui  
*she's twelve*
- 54 ANNA Liling
- 55 LILING è che la sua sorella ha dodici anni (.) può venire?  
*his sister is twelve years old (.) can she come?*
- 56 ANNA SÌ  
YES

Liling understands the plan and starts putting it into action. She acts as a co-participant, as a member of the performance team (Valdés et al., 2003), contributing what she can to accomplish the communicative goal, i.e., Hu should be picked up as he cannot be in school with such a high temperature. Anna and Emma expect Liling to help by rendering what they say in Italian to Hu in Chinese. However, Liling intervenes by implementing the communicative strategies she deems more effective to find a solution. In turn 44, for example, Liling replaces the monolingual interlocutor. Liling takes the turn as it is expected from her to broker, but she does not interpret Anna's previous turn to Hu, as Anna would have expected from a professional mediator. Instead, Liling uses the turn to ask Hu a new question that Anna has not yet asked. For Liling this is an interaction in which she is helping. Based on the instructions received in turn 44, Liling understands what she has to do: she

needs to find out if Hu's mom is home and if she can come and pick up Hu. Hu answers the question (turn 45) and Liling takes the next turn (turn 46) to report Hu's answer to Anna.

So far, Liling has not brokered Anna's turn (turn 43) to Hu. Instead, she has asked another question that she thought was important in order to get further information. Only in turn 48 does Liling broker both turns 43 and 47 to HU by summarizing and slightly changing the content. This example shows that Liling uses her turn to ask a question that Anna has not yet asked and may or may not have asked later. This interactional behavior, in which Liling authors her own line, could be viewed as Liling's attempt to be efficient and strategic, by anticipating the progress of the conversation and accomplishing Anna's communicative goal.

In turn 49, Anna introduces a new member of the family, Hu's sister, asking whether she can go to the center and take Hu home. From previous interactions with the family, Anna knows that when Hu's mother could not come to the center to pick up Hu, his sister usually did so. Here (turn 50), one more time, Liling adopts the same interactional strategy: she does not broker Anna's turn to Hu; instead she asks Hu a question.

Liling does not know that Hu has a sister (Anna does, but Liling does not). Thus, before brokering Anna's question to Hu, Liling verifies whether Hu has a sister or not. Once Liling receives Hu's confirmation that he has a sister (turn 51), Liling, on her own initiative, checks Hu's sister age (turn 52). The question about Hu's sister age is relevant because Liling knows that the Italian educators usually check the siblings' age before allowing them to act in their parents' place. Liling does not know that the Italian educator is familiar with Hu's sister and her age. After six turns, in turn 55, Liling answers Anna's question (from turn 49) and adds the question "Can she come?" After these six turns, Liling still has not brokered the question "can his sister come and pick him up" to Hu. She did not broker Anna's turn in the way a professional mediator may have approached the task. Instead she acted as a member of the performance team who was called to help Anna and Hu to achieve their communicative goals.

Excerpt 2 shows another example in which Liling replaces the monolingual interlocutor. However, unlike Excerpt 1 in which Liling's interactional behavior appears to be led by her intention to contribute to the progress of the conversation and avoid brokering when she considers it irrelevant, in Excerpt 2 Liling behaves differently. Liling takes the turn to ask Hu some questions. We may hypothesize that she is trying to ascertain specific information which Liling thinks is important to confirm before brokering Anna's turn to Hu. Liling replaces the monolingual interlocutors once again, but she does not replace Hu by answering in his place. Instead she replaces Anna by expanding her questions. In addition, unlike in Excerpt 1 when Anna realizes that Liling is replacing Hu's voice and invites Liling to broker, in Excerpt 2 Hu does not realize that Liling is replacing Anna's voice, and Hu is never informed about what Anna said in turn 49.

#### 5.4 Summarizing the monolingual interlocutor's turn

In Excerpt 3 we see another interactional behavior that Liling adopts with the intention of being efficient, to speed up the course of action as well as the flow of conversation. This behavior consists of summarizing the monolingual interlocutor's turn. We join the conversation when Anna has just measured Hu's temperature and wants to know how Hu is feeling.

#### Excerpt 3

- 31 ANNA gli puoi chiedere se lui si sente la febbre perché sta male male (.) ha la febbre molto alta dovrebbe stare molto male  
*can you ask him if he feels fever because he is sick (.) he has very high fever he should be very sick*  
(2.0)
- 32 LILING 你现在有没有感觉 (.) 很难过?  
*ni xian zai you mei you gan jue (.) hen nan guo?*  
*do you feel (.) very bad?*

In turn 32, Liling summarizes Anna's turn and only brokers the gist of Anna's question. Liling leaves out the Italian educator's assumption according to which Hu should feel really sick given his high temperature. In addition to the strategy of summarizing adopted by Liling, in Excerpt 3 we can also see that Anna, once again, invites and steers Liling to broker (turn 31) by explicitly asking her to do so.

A similar interactional pattern can be found in Excerpt 4 below, where Liling summarizes Anna's turn by brokering only the information that she thinks Hu should know, and Anna clearly guides Liling to her brokering task.

#### Excerpt 4

- 67 ANNA allora suo papà ha il telefono spento (.) provo a chiamare sua sorella perché ho il numero (.) anche se è piccola però se c'è la mamma magari parliamo insieme ok? (17.0) se vuole adesso può coprirsi eh (.) diglielo  
*so his dad's phone is turned off (.) I'll try to call his sister because I have her number (.) even if she's little but if his mum is with her we can talk together ok? (17.0) if he wants he can cover up (.) tell him*
- 68 LILING 你可以把外套穿上了  
*you can put your jacket on*

At the end of turn 67, Anna expressly requests Liling to tell Hu what she has just said ("tell him").

In turn 68, Liling follows Anna's instruction and brokers Anna's turn to Hu. However, Liling only says that Hu can put his jacket on and omits all the previous information given by Anna about the fact that his dad is not answering the phone and she will try to call Hu's mother. Both Excerpts 3 and 4 exemplify the strategy of summarizing as the technique used by Liling. From the transcripts analyzed, it appears that Liling does not broker the information she may consider irrelevant and only reports the gist of the message that she considers necessary to be brokered.

In the excerpts we have analyzed, it is also clear that the Italian educators' perceptions of Liling are that of a child who attends the center. They know Liling understands Italian well. It is based on their perceptions of the child's bilingualism and ability to broker conversations that they ask Liling to help their communication with Hu.

Even though they do not see Liling as a mediator, but rather as a child who goes to the center and who will help them because she speaks Italian well, they nevertheless expect Liling to render exactly the content they provide at the time they provide it. When they realize that Liling is departing from their expectations of how language brokering should occur, or, when Liling needs some guidance in performing it, they take control and gently guide Liling to broker the interaction in line with their expectations. The educators continue to monitor Liling's renditions very closely throughout the interaction.

## 6. Discussion

The data we present depict some of the communication strategies adopted by CLBs while fulfilling the communicative goals of the interaction in which they are involved. From the excerpts examined and the contextual information gathered during the study, we highlight the following:

1. It appears that when CLBs are asked to help with communication, there might be little shared understanding of what "help with communication" means. Adults and children do not conceptualize communication, helping or brokering in the same way. This can be observed from the very beginning in Excerpt 1, turns 4 and 7, when the Italian educators expect Liling to help with communication by brokering what they have said, but Liling makes her communicative contribution by replacing the voice of the third party (Hu, in this case). This communicative misunderstanding is caused by the presence of misaligned expectations between the Italian

educators and the child language broker, as there was no discussion of at the onset of the interaction regarding what brokering implies.

- 2- CLB may not be aware that the educators have an expectation of how CLBs should behave when asked to help communicate with speakers of other languages than Italian. While the educators realize they are dealing with children, rather than with professional mediators, they still expect some behaviors learned by professionals, although not available to CLBs. In addition, the educators try to direct CLBs as they would direct children in a class, and they may expect children to comply with their guidelines, without realizing that the interpreted communicative event is a different context where contributions from both CLBs and educators are equally important or necessary to achieve the communicative goals set for the communicative event. This also shows that CLBs act as competent and contributing social actors and fully participate in the brokered interaction (Baraldi, 2014; Mayall, 2000).
- 3- CLBs contribute to the progress of communication by adopting strategies they think are more efficient. They do not ask for permission or check with the educators ahead of time. In this study, two communicative strategies are observed: replacing the monolingual interlocutors and summarizing the other interlocutors' turns (Angelelli, 2004: 78 and Wadensjö, 1998: 107). Liling enacts the first strategy to achieve the communicative instrumental goal (Kam et al., 2017) specific to the communicative event she is brokering (i.e., providing answers to Anna and Emma's questions). One could argue that because Liling knows the answer the sick child (Hu) would give, she prefers to give the answer herself instead of spending precious time on brokering. She is concerned because her friend is sick, because time is of the essence and, thus, she provides the answers herself (Ehninger, 1977). The same could be argued when she replaces the Italian educators, since Liling anticipates possible questions they could ask later on in the conversation. When Liling summarizes the monolingual's response, she only reports the gist of the information relevant to accomplish the communicative goal (Grice, 1975). In so doing, once again, she appears not to meet the Italian educators' expectations regarding roles or their requests to broker all the information without omitting or changing the content.
- 4- Even though the Italian educators are aware that CLBs are neither adults nor professionals and that they have been invited to help in a communicative task, it appears they have an expectation as to how interpreted mediated communication should occur, even if performed by a child. The Italian educators have worked with professional language mediators in the past and they guide Liling in her brokering activities, holding professional mediators as a model. As a result, they expect Liling to broker each turn, which can be observed on many occasions (e.g., Excerpt 1, turns 8 and 10; Excerpt 3, turn 31). The Italian educators do not give up control of the conversation and hold on to their expectations. Once they realize that Liling needs to be guided to perform this role as they expect it to be done, they provide such guidance. Their intention is to help Liling, and so they guide her as part of the performance team concept they are establishing together. Moreover, understanding Liling is a child, they carefully monitor her brokering activities throughout the interaction.

From the discussion above, at least two possible hypothesis emerge in terms of performances and expectations: 1) there could be a mismatch between the expectations and the reality of what child-brokered communication is for adults and for children; 2) when CLBs perform with adults they constitute a performance team even when the adults are not family members or friends.

The communicative behavior exhibited by Liling is not in line with the expectations of the educators. The Italian educators have already worked with professional mediators and know what they can expect from them. When Liling does not broker each turn, she is not meeting the educators' expectations of what mediating/brokering is based on their previous experiences. However, Liling

does display remarkable communication skills across languages under pressure. She tries to report short, clear and relevant information to facilitate communication and she also exhibits an active role in a conversation usually managed by adults. The *real* brokering only takes place when the adult educators explain to Liling that she has to tell Hu in Chinese what they are saying in Italian. Otherwise, Liling helps the communication by implementing the communicative strategies she considers more effective to accomplish the communicative goal. Brokering as professional mediators do may not be feasible or included among them.

The results of this study show that, even though Liling's interactional moves may or may not correspond to what an adult professional mediator would or would not do, CLB's are full members of the communication team (Valdés et al., 2003), and they pursue the communication goals in the way they deem more efficient, in alignment with the communicative principles of brevity, clarity and relevancy (Grice, 1975). In sum, the brokering strategies (i.e., replacing a monolingual interlocutor or summarizing the monolingual interlocutor's turn) implemented by Liling reflect the choices she made in order to be as effective as possible and help communication with her friend. These choices, however, may differ from those of professional mediators.

### **7. Conclusion, implications, limitations and call for further research**

In this study we set out to examine frequent communication strategies implemented by a child language broker and examine if/how they meet the other parties' expectations. We focused on replacement of a monolingual interlocutor and summarizing of the monolingual interlocutors' statements. In addition, we explored whether CLB's communicative strategies matched adults' expectations.

Our results come from empirical data, i.e., on-site observation and recordings followed by analyses of two communicative events among four interlocutors which were part of a larger ethnographic study. We are aware of the limitations of this study and that our research design does not allow for generalization of findings. We acknowledge, however, that, as evident from the results, the expectations on roles and communicative needs shared and not shared among participants appear to impact the ways in which CLB's perform their tasks. Further research is required on the consequences of adults having communicative expectations aligned with or contrary to the actual roles performed by CLB's. In addition, the active contribution of children to a communicative event involving the presence of adults should be valued and deserves further study. Research on participants' expectations and enactment of their roles might also reveal information about the macro and micro-context in which CLB takes place.

**(WC 7234)**

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Conventions of transcription**

>text<	The speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker
<text>	The speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker
<u>text</u>	The speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech
°text°	Whisper or reduced volume speech
TEXT	Shouted or increased volume speech
tex-	Interruption in utterance
te::xt	Prolongation of an utterance
.	Falling pitch
,	Temporary rise or fall in intonation
?	Rising pitch
=	The break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance.
[text]	The start and end points of overlapping speech
[[text	Simultaneous start of speech
(text)	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript
(xxxx)	Inaudible or incomprehensible expressions
((text))	Annotation of non-verbal activity
/	Interrupted or unfinished speech
(.)	A brief pause, less than 1 second
(1.0)	One-second pause (the number indicates the length of the pause in seconds)