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## Language Brokering

# Child Language Brokering Toolkit #1<sup>1</sup> Helpful and Unhelpful Ways

## Best Practices to Manage Language Brokering<sup>2</sup>

This is a toolkit, which is a booklet resource, you can use now and for future language brokering situations. It has a list of good ideas and general tips on what parents and children can do by themselves and together to make language brokering successful.

<sup>1</sup> Child Language Brokering - children providing support by translating and interpreting things to and from English for their parents who lack or have limited English skills (Tse, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from TIES CCW Settlement Practitioner's Toolkit 2020

**Note:** Definitions of some words are located at the bottom of the page



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## **This toolkit was produced by Research & Program Development at The Immigrant Education Society.**

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# BEST PRACTICES (PARENT)

These are suggestions for **parents** to follow *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

## Before Language Brokering

- **Prepare** before asking your child...
  - ◆ **Think about** the situation or the information to be translated
    - Is it okay to ask your child?
    - Is it too difficult or (culturally) sensitive for your child?
    - Will this cause your child to feel stress?
    - Will your child miss school or skip homework or other activities (for example, sports, job, school clubs, etc.) to do the translations?
    - Could another person do the translations for you?
  - ◆ Think of the **words or ideas** in your first language and/or English you might have to explain to your child
  - ◆ If there are things that you don't understand, try to **Google the information**, or **ask someone** for an explanation
    - For example, if you are going to the doctor's office for a health condition, try to Google some definitions of words or how to say something, such as "My legs feel painful, I feel weak when I stand up."
- **Good ways** to ask your child...
  - ◆ Kindly ask your child to help. Do not tell him/her to help you
  - ◆ **Encourage** him/her to look up the definitions and practice using them in sentences in both languages
  - ◆ **Advise** your child that it will be okay, s/he will do a good job, and you'll be there to help

Children need time to know what they are translating and to prepare on their own.

## During Language Brokering

- **Tell** any people (for example, your child's teacher, a doctor, or a banker, etc.) the situation (in-person or over the telephone) at the **start** that your child will help you with translations and you give permission for your child to speak for you
- **Give some time** for your child to think about the situation and information to be translated



- ◆ For example, if you are at the hospital and your child needs time to think about the translations, tell the doctor that your child needs the time to think
- Notice if your child may be *confused* or *having problems*...
  - **Try to re-explain or change the words in your first language**
  - **Use simple words**
  - **Repeat or speak more slowly**
  - **Use a translation app on your phone**

## **After** Language Brokering

- **Think** about how the language brokering situation went
  - ◆ Did it go well?
  - ◆ Did I understand and get what I need?
  - ◆ Was it too difficult for my child?
  - ◆ Did my child need more help from me?
  - ◆ Did my preparation before and help during the situation make it easier?
- Think of the things you could **improve on** or **do differently**...
  - ◆ Preparing more
  - ◆ Learning more English words or finding more words in your first language that can describe the English word or concept
  - ◆ Bringing a notebook to the situation to write down notes

## General Tips

- Encourage your child to read books or watch TV/movies in your first language for him/her to improve first language comprehension skills
- Find a good time for you to practice speaking English at home with your child
- Encourage your child to speak your first language as much as possible so s/he can practice, improve, and maintain your first language



# BEST PRACTICES (CHILD)

These are suggested guidelines for **children** to follow *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

## Before Language Brokering

- Once your parent asks you to translate...
  - ◆ Search for the correct vocabulary you may not know on the Internet or dictionary
    - Look at **different** resources because some websites can give the wrong meaning and some words don't have updated definitions in the dictionary (e.g., slang words, idioms, or newly recent words/concepts)
  - ◆ Write down these words and the translated words in your first language
  - ◆ Ask questions or research about how things/services operate if you are not familiar with it (for example, figuring out how filing taxes works)
- Practice
  - ◆ Once you learned the correct vocabulary, practice using the new words in sentences to make sure you are using the words correctly
  - ◆ If you feel shy or nervous about speaking...
    - Write down a script of what you will say and possible scenarios of what the third person (if present) would say back
    - Look in the mirror, and rehearse the script

## During Language Brokering

- **Think about** the situation (Take a moment to process what is going on)
  - ◆ If you did not have the chance to prepare before the situation...
    - What is happening?
    - Is this an easy or difficult situation?
    - Do you know about the information and vocabulary you have to translate?
    - What kind of help do I need or what kind of helpful things should I do to approach this translation?
  - ◆ If you already prepared before this situation...
    - Is this situation what I expected or imagined?
    - Can I use what I prepared?
    - Do I still need more helpful things to support me in this situation?
- Let the third person (if present) know that you will assist your parent with translations if your parent hasn't already done so
- The **translation**
  - ◆ **Ask questions** to your parent and/or the third person, if present



- ◆ Request people (your parent or third person) involved to **speak slower, repeat things, or use basic words**
- ◆ If you feel pressure or nervous trying to think quickly...
  - Let your parent or the third person know that you need some time to think
  - Use your phone as a resource → search for definitions or meanings of words, translation apps
    - \*\*\*However, remember that some of the google translations are not entirely correct, but using your phone as a resource can still assist you
- ◆ **Paraphrase**<sup>3</sup> information instead of trying to translate everything word for word
  - When processing the information in your head to translate → **simplify** the information to make it easy for understanding
- ◆ If you don't have enough time to search for definitions/meanings of words, **write** them down on paper or **type** them on a notes app on your phone, so you can look them up later

### Tips for translating written things or spoken information:

- 1. Break up the written or spoken information (paragraphs or sentences) into short segments or chunks
- 2. Instead of translating everything word-for-word, try to use your own word (paraphrase) the meaning of the sentences

### For unfamiliar words:

- 3. Describe the word
- 4. Guess the meaning of the word from its context
- 5. Make up a meaning or ask another person for help or search for the meaning on the Internet or dictionary

## After Language Brokering

- If you did not understand specific **English** words or ideas...
  - ◆ Google or search in the dictionary for meanings
    - Look at **multiple** resources because some websites can give the wrong meaning and some words don't have updated definitions in the dictionary (e.g., slang words or newly recent words/concepts)
  - ◆ Ask your schoolteacher for word meanings and how they are used
  - ◆ Look for similar words and how these words are used in sentences
  - ◆ Write down the words and their definitions, so you can remember them easily

<sup>3</sup> **Paraphrase** → Using different words to describe something written or spoken by someone else.

- Also, write down your first language's words that translate the new English words
- ◆ Practice saying these new words to yourself and to other people (for example, your sibling(s), friends, classmates, co-workers, etc.) to make sure you are using them correctly
- If you did not understand specific **first language** words or ideas...
  - ◆ Ask your parent to teach and explain the meanings
  - ◆ Ask your parent for similar words and to use them in different sentences
  - ◆ Google or search in a dictionary for meanings
    - Look at **multiple** resources because some websites can give the wrong meaning and some words don't have updated definitions in the dictionary
  - ◆ Write down the words and their definitions, so you can remember them easily
    - Also, write down the English words that translate the new first language words
  - ◆ Practice saying these new words to your parent to make sure you are using the new word(s) correctly

## General Tips

- Read books or watch TV/movies in your first language to improve comprehension skills
- Try to speak your first language as much as possible at home and to others that speak it for you to practice, improve, and maintain first language proficiency
- Practice paraphrasing English text to your first language and vice-versa
  - For example, read an English story, and then explain the story to yourself in your first language
    - This will encourage you to learn new contextual words in both languages and to practice using similar words

These tips will help you develop and strengthen your bilingualism and language brokering abilities and skills



# BEST PRACTICES (TEAMWORK)

These are suggested guidelines for parents and children to follow **together** *before, during, and after* language brokering situations.

Teamwork is about using **what you know** and **how you are** to work together to make language brokering easier and successful

## Before Language Brokering

### → Preparation

- ◆ Set a time for you to sit down together and talk about the language brokering situation
- ◆ Ask each other about expectations
  - Examples:
    - Parent: “How should I present myself in front of your schoolteacher?”
    - Child: “What do we do when we get to the hospital?”
- ◆ **Child** → Ask your parent questions to better understand
  - For example: “Can you tell me more about what this means?”
- ◆ **Parent** → Make sure your child is understanding what you need
  - For example: “Do you understand how to tell the doctor about my symptoms of sickness?”

### → Practice

- ◆ Pretend you are in the language brokering situation...
  - Practice communicating with each other
    - For example:
      - ◆ Practice carefully listening to each other
      - ◆ Practice speaking to each other in a calm tone
      - ◆ Practice speaking with clearly
  - Practice helping each other with using different vocabulary words in both languages
  - If a third person will be involved in the situation, think of the different things the person could say



## During Language Brokering

- **Assess** the situation together
  - ◆ If you did **not** have the chance to prepare together before the situation...
    - What is happening?
    - Is this an easy or difficult situation?
    - Do we know about the information and vocabulary we must translate?
    - What kind of helpful can we do together?
  - ◆ If you **already** prepared together before this situation...
    - Is this situation what we expected or imagined?
    - Can we use what we prepared?
    - Do we still need more helpful things to support us in this situation?
- Let the third person (if present) know that the child will be doing translations for the parent
- The **translation**...
  - ◆ Asking each other questions to make you both are understanding the information
  - ◆ Practicing **patience**...
    - Allowing enough time for each other to think about the information
    - Speaking slowly
    - Repeating words
    - Re-explaining things in different words
    - Simplifying information
  - ◆ **Meaning-making**<sup>4</sup> → when there is something both or one of you are not understanding...
    - Understanding the meaning on something together by describing something in many words in your first language
    - Using a translation app on the phone to find words to describe something
  - ◆ **Non-verbal communication**<sup>5</sup> → when you can't use words to translate information, you can use...
    - Facial (face) expressions
      - For example, → showing your facial expression can show the other person that you may understand something even though you cannot say it clearly
    - Hand gestures
      - For example →, pointing to a body part in pain when you're at the doctor
    - Head nodding
      - For example, shaking your head 'yes' (up and down) means you understand what is being said or shaking your head 'no' (side to side) means you don't understand

<sup>4</sup> **Meaning-making** → The process of making sense of something in order to understand it

<sup>5</sup> **Non-verbal communication** → Communication messages using the body. For example, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, appearance, social cues, etc.



## After Language Brokering

### → Debriefing<sup>6</sup>:

- ◆ Share with each other...
  - The feelings you experienced during the event
  - Any helpful/unhelpful things that happened
  - Other things you both could have done differently
- ◆ Ask each other, “Did you really understand?” and “What didn’t you actually understand?”
- ◆ Talk about what to do in the next similar situation

### → If your parent or your child still does not understand after the language brokering event...

- ◆ Both of you now have the time to really explain things without the pressure
- ◆ Ask each other if you need a different way of explanation
  - The use of examples (pictures, videos, stories)
  - Simple words or different words

### → Learning together

- ◆ If there were things that you did not understand or you are confused about ...
  - Search on the Internet or ask another person for more information about the situation and vocabulary and share it with each other
  - Write it down for the next time you are in that situation

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<sup>6</sup> *Debriefing* → an immediate discussion about what happened during a language brokering event

