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**Language  
Brokering**

# Child Language Brokering Checklist

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**How to cite:** Pando, E. et al. (2020). *Child language brokering checklist*. The Immigrant Education Society, Research and Program Development Department. [https://www.immigrant-education.ca/see-the-research/language-brokering-initiative#googtrans\(en|en\)](https://www.immigrant-education.ca/see-the-research/language-brokering-initiative#googtrans(en|en))

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## BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☐ Schedule enough time for the meeting:
  - Meetings with interpreters take longer, often double the regular time.
  - Children should have enough time to think without pressure.
  - Parents may require additional explanations.
- ☐ Arrange for a separate space to conduct the meeting if possible:
  - The child might feel embarrassed or self-conscious interpreting in front of other people.

### **Negative language brokering situation:**

A child interprets at the bank for her father, but feels pressured and rushed by other people in line, worried that she and her parent are taking too long.

- This might also put children and parents at ease if they are feeling nervous or anxious.
- ☐ Encourage the parent to discuss in advance with the child the nature of the brokering situation (what kinds of questions they may be asked, how they might respond, etc.).
- ☐ Talk to the child in advance to brief them about the situation.
- ☐ Find out if the child is an experienced language broker. If so, in what contexts or situations and how did the child feel about it?
- ☐ If the child is an experienced broker, ask if they have a preferred system to do the interpretation. ☐ Discuss with the parent what is likely to be accomplished so the parent does not have unrealistic expectations (and later blame their child if their preferred outcome is not achieved).
- ☐ Remind the child to stay calm and take their time. If the child cannot remember all the details, let them know that translating the general idea is fine, and if they don't understand something, they can ask the other person to repeat or explain again.

## DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ Start the meeting with a positive interaction or comment.
- ☐ Acknowledge the child's presence, participation, and contribution to the overall situation.

### **Negative language brokering situation:**

A child will interpret for his mother at a doctor's appointment, but the doctor does not acknowledge the child's role and even asks him to leave. The child stays close by so he can listen to the conversation and later explain to his mother what the doctor said.



- ☐ Remind adults to avoid talking over each other and use short sentences (especially important if the child is a first-time language broker).
- ☐ Address the parent and ask other adults to do this as well as parents:
  - Might worry that the parental role is being reversed.
  - Might feel it is disrespectful for a young person to interact with other adults.
- ☐ Monitor the following:
  - Is the discussion moving away from the original topic? If then, shift the conversation back to its original goal.
  - Is the discussion turning into something that the child may not be able to comprehend and/or may inflict more harm? If so, the interpretation may need to be stopped and resumed with the help of an adult and/or professional interpreter.
  - Is the child trying to calm the parent? If so, ask the child if everything is okay and whether or not they would like you to intervene.
  - Does the child seem confused or in need of help? If so, then remind adults to use short sentences and simple language. Ask the child if there are any concepts/words from his first language that he/she has a difficult time translating into English.

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## AFTER THE MEETING

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- ☐ Provide praise to the child; encourage them and acknowledge that language brokering is a skill set that they are developing (language brokers often facilitate the completion of tasks that may otherwise have remained unaccomplished).
- ☐ Ask the child how they felt during interpreting, if there is anything they are unsure of, and if there was anything that made the task of interpreting more difficult?
- ☐ Debrief with the parent. Did the parent understand what was translated? Does he or she know what to do next?
- ☐ Resolve tensions (did the parent become difficult or demanding on the child during language brokering?).
- ☐ Plan for the future. Is a follow-up appointment needed? Does the language broker feel comfortable to volunteer their time? Is a translator needed (in case the child is preoccupied, does not feel comfortable, or it may not be appropriate for them to attend the follow-up).

This project was funded by The City of Calgary's Change Can't Wait Initiative

