

This article was downloaded by: [Jorida Cila]

On: 14 September 2014, At: 09:41

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmmm20>

Language brokering, acculturation, and empowerment: evidence from South Asian Canadian young adults

Jorida Cila^a & Richard N. Lalonde^a

^a Department of Psychology, York University, 297 Behavioural Science Building, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada
Published online: 10 Sep 2014.

To cite this article: Jorida Cila & Richard N. Lalonde (2014): Language brokering, acculturation, and empowerment: evidence from South Asian Canadian young adults, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.953540>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Language brokering, acculturation, and empowerment: evidence from South Asian Canadian young adults

Jorida Cila* and Richard N. Lalonde

Department of Psychology, York University, 297 Behavioural Science Building, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada

(Received 19 September 2013; accepted 25 July 2014)

The present study examined the practice of language brokering (LB) among South Asian Canadian college-age adults and how such practice relates to acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures, as well as personal empowerment. One hundred and twenty-four young adults reported on three different indices of LB (brokering frequency, diversity of people, and diversity of items translated), as well as measures of acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures, and personal empowerment. Whereas brokering frequency and number of people one brokers for were not related to acculturation, findings suggested that the wider the range of items and topics brokered, the stronger the reported acculturation to both mainstream and heritage cultures. Further, brokering for a more diverse pool of individuals was predictive of more individual empowerment, whereas brokering frequency and diversity of items translated were not related to empowerment. Findings point at the importance of going beyond brokering frequency to examine multiple indicators of brokering as they relate to acculturation and personal empowerment. Limitations and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: language brokering; mainstream acculturation; heritage acculturation; empowerment; South Asian Canadian

The past two decades have witnessed an increased research interest in language brokering (LB), or the process by which children of immigrants translate for their parents and other individuals who are not fluent in a host country's language (Weisskirch 2005). These children are commonly referred to as language brokers (McQuillan and Tse 1995; Tse 1995). Studies have found that LB takes place in various settings (e.g. at home, school, over the phone); is done for different people (e.g. parents, relatives, and even strangers); and involves translating and interpreting various items (e.g. notes from school, bills, TV shows; Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez, and Moran 1998; Tse 1995, 1996; Weisskirch and Alva 2002). The scope of the LB literature has been broad, but of particular interest for the present study is research that has examined acculturation in relation to LB (e.g. Weisskirch and Alva 2002; Weisskirch 2005, 2007; Weisskirch et al. 2011).

Although the vast majority of published work on LB comes from the United States and focuses on Hispanic-Americans, there has been a growing scholarly interest in extending our understanding of LB to other national, cultural, and linguistic groups, such as Russians (Jones and Trickett 2005), Chinese (Hua and Costigan 2012), and Germans

*Corresponding author. Email: jcila@yorku.ca

(Titzmann 2012), among others. The present study adds to this growing body of work with its focus on South Asian Canadians, one of the largest immigrant groups in Canada (Statistics Canada 2006). South Asian Canadians demonstrate a vibrant ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977), as expressed in language use, presence of media in ethnic languages, as well as services and organisations catering to their needs. Some of the languages spoken in Southern Asia (e.g. Punjabi, Urdu) are among those that show the highest level of intergenerational transmission among South Asian Canadians (Houle 2011). Notably, Punjabi speakers in Canada are among the most likely to work in a place that requires them to speak only, or mainly, Punjabi, with limited or no use of English or French, Canada's official languages (Thomas 2009). While such employment opportunities allow these immigrants to make a living in their immigration destination, they are not conducive to learning or improving one's knowledge of either official language (English or French). In fact, this language barrier may be one of the factors that may help explain the relatively high levels of perceived discrimination reported by South Asian Canadians in the areas of employment and promotions (Dion and Kawakami 1996). Children of immigrants, on the other hand, are immersed in mainstream educational institutions, which enables their mainstream language and cultural competency, and which in turn facilitates their role as language brokers. In this study we examined the links between LB on the one hand and acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture, acculturation to the heritage culture, and personal empowerment on the other. Following is a discussion of how the practice of LB – here measured in terms of frequency of brokering, number of people translated for, and diversity of topics translated – relates to the three main outcome variables. We are adding to the existing literature by focusing on a new immigrant population, South Asian Canadians, and by recruiting only participants who had at least minimal experience with LB.

LB and acculturation

Despite the term, language brokers do more than language translation. They can and do influence the content of the message that they transmit (Tse 1995), and they may also transmit some cultural knowledge (Jones and Trickett 2005). This makes sociocultural competency in both heritage and mainstream cultures necessary to fully enact one's responsibilities as a language broker (Buriel et al. 1998). In fact, many of the Chinese and Vietnamese students surveyed by Tse (1996) reported that their knowledge of both heritage and mainstream languages and cultures improved because of brokering. Current literature on the relationship between LB and acculturation, however, has provided mixed results, in part due to the specific conceptualizations and measurements of acculturation employed in different studies. For instance, Buriel et al. (1998) looked at the relationship between LB and a measure closely assigned with acculturation (i.e. biculturalism) and found a positive relationship between the two. Other studies, however, have found that more frequent brokering was associated with less acculturation among Latino adolescents (Weisskirch 2005) and children (Weisskirch and Alva 2002) in the United States. In a later, large-scale study surveying over one thousand university students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, Weisskirch and colleagues (2011) found that frequent language brokers, compared to infrequent and non-brokers scored higher on acculturation. These inconsistencies in research findings about the relationship between LB and acculturation highlight the need for further research on the topic.

At this point it is worth noting two potentially problematic issues in the research literature on the brokering–acculturation relationship. The first issue, also acknowledged

by Weisskirch (2005), concerns the measures used to assess acculturation. Most published studies tend to use measures of acculturation that are either predominantly based on language competency (e.g. Weisskirch and Alva 2002; Weisskirch 2005, 2007), or where language items comprise a significant part of the measure (e.g. Buriel et al. 1998; Weisskirch et al. 2011). Proficiency in the majority (i.e. mainstream) language is undoubtedly crucial to the acculturation process, as without proper command of the language, one's integration into the mainstream society would greatly suffer. In particular, among bicultural youth, insufficient command of the mainstream language might directly affect their identity development with potential adverse effects on their feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. It needs to be recognised, however, that while language proficiency is an important aspect of the acculturation process (Berry 1997, 2005), there is certainly more to acculturation than language fluency. In the present study, we used a measure of acculturation that does not rely on language proficiency, but rather encompasses various aspects of acculturation, such as participation in cultural activities, values, friendships, etc.

The second issue relates to how acculturation is conceptualised and measured in the LB literature. Despite the fact that scholars in the field seem to recognise acculturation as bi-dimensional (i.e. including acculturation to both mainstream and heritage cultures), published work on the topic of LB and acculturation combines both, thus yielding single scores of acculturation, which are then assessed against LB experiences. Such practice, however, limits our understanding of what the relationship or influence of LB might be on an individual's acculturation to the mainstream or heritage cultures, separately – this is one of the goals of the present study. Specifically, we believe that acculturation is bi-dimensional in that heritage and mainstream cultural identifications can develop and operate independently from each other (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000). In other words, such a model recognises that a bicultural individual's identification with the mainstream culture may happen independently from one's identification with the ethnic culture. Importantly, such conceptualization acknowledges that each cultural identification, ethnic or mainstream, might have different antecedents and outcomes. Therefore, in the present study we used the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000), which is based on this bi-dimensional understanding of acculturation, to assess acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures separately. Overall, we believe that the present approach to the conceptualization and measurement of acculturation provides a theoretical improvement over the existing body of work. Given that LB offers individuals the opportunity to learn more about both cultures (Tse 1996) and interact more with members of both mainstream society and heritage groups, we expected LB to be positively related to acculturation to both mainstream and heritage cultures.

LB and empowerment

In addition to the link between LB and mainstream and heritage acculturation, research suggests that brokering experiences are also associated with increased feelings of independence, competence, maturity, and self-efficacy. McQuillan and Tse (1995) conducted in-depth interviews with nine bilingual adults from diverse ethnic backgrounds and found that participants perceived their LB experiences as influencing their independence and maturity. For instance, one of their participants recalled that because of these earlier experiences with LB, she felt more mature upon entering college compared to other freshmen. Language brokers have more opportunities to make decisions compared to non-brokers and that tends to give individuals a sense of efficacy

over their environment. In addition, the same study suggested that brokering provides individuals who participate in it with an enhanced understanding of other cultures and more knowledge about the world. All this might lead to a generalised sense of personal empowerment that transcends the specific brokering situation.

Later research, using primarily quantitative methods, has elaborated on these earlier findings by McQuillan and Tse by examining potential moderators and mediators of the brokering–efficacy relationship. For instance, Weisskirch and Alva (2002) studied Spanish-English bilingual children and their findings suggested that among this age group LB might not be positively related to efficacy, likely because the practice of LB might be too demanding for children who are not yet fully developed cognitively and linguistically. This suggests that among an older population, such as young adults, LB might convey a sense of efficacy. In fact, recent research by Weisskirch (2013) suggests that increased brokering frequency was associated with a higher sense of self-efficacy among Mexican-American emerging adults, notably when brokering was not perceived as a burden.

Further, Wu and Kim (2009) suggest that constructs such as familial obligation need to be taken into consideration when examining whether LB is perceived as a sense of burden or efficacy. Although their study focused on Chinese American adolescents, their findings might apply to other cultural and age groups. Specifically, work conducted in our own lab with South Asian Canadians suggests the importance of family connectedness and the value placed on family, albeit in the domain of intimate relationships (e.g. Lalonde, Cila, Lou, and Giguere 2013; Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, and Tatla 2004).

In this study we prefer to use the term empowerment, as opposed to (self-)efficacy, as in our opinion the latter implies a sense of accomplishment or control that is specific to a situation or task at hand, whereas the term empowerment implies a more generalised state that transcends the specific brokering situation. Although we are by no means the first to use the term empowerment in this context (see Buriel et al. 1998), to the best of our knowledge, this is the first consistent use of the concept in the LB literature.

The empowerment that comes with LB might be particularly important among young adults, who are in the process of developing and negotiating their adult identities (Arnett 2000). This transitional phase from childhood to adulthood might be especially important for youth of immigrant background, like the South Asian Canadians studied here. Such youth strive to develop their adult identities while negotiating two cultures, ethnic and mainstream, which often carry different values, norms, and traditions. Furthermore, this developmental phase often involves a re-negotiation of the relationship between young people and their parents, whereby the former try to establish an identity that is autonomous, and at times different, from the latter (Berry, Phinney, Kwak, and Sam 2006). In the LB context, this relationship might be important considering that a significant amount of brokering among biculturals is done for the parents. Although important, a consideration of these developmental and relationship changes falls outside of the scope of the present paper.

Before proceeding with the description of the present study, a final methodological issue is worth discussing. Previous research has used categorical distinctions when assessing frequency of brokering (i.e. frequent broker/infrequent broker; e.g. Buriel et al. 1998; Martinez, McClure, and Eddy 2009; Weisskirch and Alva 2002; Weisskirch 2005, 2007; Weisskirch et al. 2011), which may mask the potential variability in actual brokering frequency. In this study, we adopted a continuous measure of brokering frequency (i.e. reported number of times one has translated over a specific period of time). In addition, we also took into consideration the range of items translated and the diversity of people for whom one translates. It is possible that the effects of brokering on

the various outcome measures of interest in this study might vary as a result of not only the frequency of brokering but also the diversity of the items and topics translated or the diversity of the people for whom one translates. For instance, someone who brokers for more people or a more diverse pool of items might have a different perception and different outcomes of one's brokering experience compared to someone who only brokers for one's parents or only specific items.¹

Overview of the present study

The main goal of this study was to explore various cultural outcomes of LB, with a specific focus on acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures, as well as personal empowerment. The present study extends existing literature in a few ways: (1) we provide a theoretical improvement on the conceptualization and measurement of acculturation; (2) we adopt a comprehensive approach to measuring LB; (3) we add to the limited Canadian LB literature; and (4) we focus on a population that is understudied (i.e. South Asian Canadians). Although we expected that more brokering would be predictive of stronger acculturation to both mainstream and heritage cultures, and stronger empowerment, we did not make any specific predictions regarding which aspect of brokering (i.e. frequency, number of people, or number of items/topics) would significantly predict each outcome variable. Given research suggesting that LB is affected by family dynamics (Jones and Trickett 2005; Weisskirch et al. 2011; Wu and Kim 2009), in the present study we used family allocentrism (Lay et al. 1998), a measure of family connectedness, as a control variable, so that we could separate the unique effects of LB on acculturation and empowerment among South Asian Canadians.

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of 124 students from a large Canadian university participated in this study (77% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.0$, $SD = 2.15$). All participants identified as South Asian and indicated previous experience with LB. Over 90% of the participants were Canadian citizens, and 10% were permanent residents. Many participants (46.8%) were born in Canada; of those born abroad, the mean age of arrival in Canada was 7.3 years ($SD = 6.3$); and countries of birth were mainly Pakistan, India, or Sri Lanka. Only 35% reported English as their first language (this figure rose to 62% among those born in Canada). The most common first languages, other than English, were Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, and Tamil. All participants reported being very fluent in English, except for one who rated her English proficiency as average. When interacting with their parents, most participants reported speaking both languages, heritage and English (57%), 31% said they spoke primarily their heritage language, and 12% said they spoke English.

After consenting to participate in the study, participants completed an online questionnaire that included basic demographic information as well as the measures described below. Throughout the questionnaire, the more common term 'translation' was used instead of 'brokering' to ensure ease of understanding.

General brokering questionnaire

This questionnaire was adapted from Tse (1996) and consists of four sections that ask for (1) whom the participant has translated (e.g. 'I have translated for my father'); (2) type of document/item the participant has translated (e.g. 'I have translated notes or letters from

school’); (3) the frequency of brokering (e.g. ‘In the past month I have translated ____ times’); and (4) where the participant has translated (e.g. ‘I have translated at the doctor’s office’). An ‘Other (please specify)’ option was provided to participants for Sections a, b, and d, above, giving them the opportunity to respond freely to these questions based on their unique LB experiences. Nevertheless, very few participants selected the ‘other’ option. In addition, whereas Section (3) above asked participants to report on the frequency of their brokering experiences during the past month, Sections (1), (2), and (4) did not specify a time frame.

Composite scores were created for each of the first two measures in order to come up with a continuous measure for the total number of different people one translates for and the total number of different topics/items one has translated. Given the degree of conflation between items and people translated for on the one hand and places where one translates on the other, we did not create a composite measure for the latter. We also believe that items brokered and people brokered for are more meaningful in describing the richness and depth of the LB experience compared to places one has brokered in. Thus, our analysis was based on three indices of brokering intensity, namely frequency of brokering, number of people one has brokered for, and number of different items/topics brokered.

Empowerment

An 11-item measure (see [Appendix](#)) was developed that included items adapted from Tse (1996, six items) and Weisskirch and Alva (2002, one item) and aimed at assessing personal and cultural empowerment resulting from the experience of LB (e.g. ‘Translating helped me mature’). Participants answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher mean scores indicating more empowerment. This measure demonstrated good reliability, $\alpha = .86$.

Vancouver index of acculturation

The Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) measure consists of 20 items measured on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) and is intended for measuring heritage (e.g. ‘I often participate in my heritage cultural traditions’) and mainstream (e.g. ‘I often participate in mainstream Canadian cultural traditions’) acculturation, with higher scores indicating stronger acculturation to each cultural group. Both Canadian and heritage acculturation subscales demonstrated good reliability, $\alpha = .85$, $\alpha = .90$, respectively.

Family allocentrism

The 21-item Family Allocentrism Scale (Lay et al. 1998) measures the degree of connectedness to one’s family, or collectivism at the family level (e.g. ‘I respect my parents’ wishes even if they are not my own’). Items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), where higher average scores indicate more connectedness to one’s family. The scale demonstrated good reliability, $\alpha = .83$.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the main study variables are presented in [Table 1](#) and bivariate correlations are presented in [Table 2](#). A detailed breakdown of participant responses for people, places, and items/topics brokered can be found in [Table 3](#).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the primary variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age when brokering started	11.7	3.2
Brokering frequency	4.5	5.2
Number of people for whom has translated	4.1	1.8
Number of items/topics translated	5.9	3.2
<i>Main measures</i>		
Canadian acculturation	6.7	1.2
Heritage acculturation	6.7	1.4
Family allocentrism	4.9	.7
Empowerment	4.0	1.3

Table 2. Zero-order correlations between the main variables.

	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Brokering frequency	.19*	.37***	-.02	.10	.11	-.02
2 People translated for		.33***	-.02	.05	.13	.25**
3 Items translated			.22*	.24**	.10	.20*
4 Canadian acculturation				.50***	.24**	.18*
5 Heritage cultural identification					.49***	.21*
6 Family allocentrism						.28**
7 Empowerment						

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Characteristics of language brokers

Language brokers translate primarily for their mothers, fathers, grandparents, and relatives, although many also translate for friends or acquaintances. On average, each broker reported translating for about four different people, with responses ranging from 1 to 8. Brokering takes place at home, school, in stores, or at doctor's offices and also in government offices and banks. Interestingly, a significant proportion of brokering happens over the phone. Language brokers report translating about six different items (ranging from 1 to 13), which vary from school notes to doctor's visits, to TV shows and jokes. Some of the most frequently translated items include notes from school, medical forms, bank statements, immigration forms, job applications, and instructions for a new appliance or piece of equipment. Interestingly, items that go beyond language competency and involve cultural knowledge as well are also in high demand for brokering (e.g. TV shows, commercials, jokes, and newspaper articles).

Participants reported that they started brokering around the age of 12. Most participants were quite active in their brokering experiences: about 53% reported brokering at least once during the past week and 85% reported brokering at least once during the past month. On average, participants reported having translated 4.45 times during the past month, with responses ranging from 0 to 23. There were no differences between Canadian- and foreign-born participants in any of the three indicators of brokering intensity, all three t values < 1.39 , not significant (ns). Similarly, no gender differences were observed for brokering intensity, all three t values < 1.33 , ns. First-born children ($M = 5.50$) reported translating more times during the past month compared to later-born children ($M = 3.72$), but this difference was not statistically significant, $t(75.28) = 1.72$, $p = .09$. First-borns did not differ from later-born children in the two

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the people, places, and items one brokers.

Percentage of respondents reporting brokering	(%)
<i>For the following people</i>	
1 Relatives	73.4
2 Mother	72.6
3 Grandparent	71.0
4 Father	58.1
5 Acquaintance	35.5
6 Friend	33.9
7 Brother	4.8
8 Sister	4.8
<i>In the following places</i>	
1 Home	65.3
2 Stores	64.5
3 Doctor's office	61.3
4 Over the phone	61.3
5 School	50.8
6 Government office	44.4
7 Bank	39.5
8 Restaurant	25.0
9 Ceremonies	13.7
<i>The following items/topics</i>	
1 Notes/letters from school	64.5
2 Medical forms	58.9
3 TV shows/movies	58.1
4 Newspaper articles	49.2
5 Jokes	46.8
6 Instructions for a new appliance/equipment	41.1
7 Advertisements/commercials	36.6
8 Bank statements	34.7
9 Immigration forms	34.7
10 Job applications	33.9
11 Insurance forms	22.6
12 Utility bills	19.4
13 Rental contracts	8.9

other measures of brokering intensity (i.e. number of people translated for and number of items translated), both t values $< .61$, ns.

LB and acculturation

To assess the influence of LB on acculturation to both mainstream and heritage cultures, two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. Given that literature suggests a link between family connectedness and brokering, we controlled for this variable in Step 1. Frequency of brokering events during the past month, the number of different people for whom each participant had translated, and the number of different items/topics that each participant had translated were entered as main predictors in Step 2. Results from regression analyses for both outcome variables are presented in Table 4. When predicting acculturation to the Canadian culture, both steps accounted for a significant proportion of variance in acculturation. Overall, this model accounted for 13% of variability in responses. Of the three measures of brokering intensity, however, only diversity of the items translated significantly predicted mainstream culture acculturation, $B = .11$,

Table 4. Hierarchical regressions predicting the relationship between LB intensity and acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures.

Predictor	Acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture				Acculturation to heritage culture			
	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>B</i> (<i>t</i>)	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>B</i> (<i>t</i>)
Step 1	7.14**	.06**			37.36***	.24***		
Family connectedness				.38 (2.67)**				.90 (6.11)***
Step 2	4.21**	.13**	.07*		11.60***	.29***	.05†	
Brokering frequency				-.03 (-1.36)				-.01 (-.17)
People brokered for				-.08 (-1.33)				-.06 (-.86)
Items translated				.11 (2.96)**				.10 (2.65)**

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in this table.

†*p* = .06, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Table 5. Hierarchical regression predicting the relationship between LB intensity and empowerment.

Predictor	<i>F</i>	Empowerment		
		<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>B</i> (<i>t</i>)
Step 1	9.62**	.08**		
Family connectedness				.43 (3.10)**
Step 2	5.25***	.16**	.08*	
Brokering frequency				-.04 (-1.54)
People brokered for				.15 (2.26)*
Items translated				.06 (1.60)

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in this table.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

$p = .004$, with individuals who had translated a more diverse pool of items reporting stronger acculturation to the Canadian culture. Specifically, every additional item translated predicted an increase of .11 points on mainstream acculturation, controlling for the effects of brokering frequency, people translated for, and family connectedness. Frequency of brokering or diversity of people for whom one translates was not related to mainstream acculturation.

A similar pattern of results was observed for acculturation to the heritage culture, with the model accounting for a significant proportion of variance in responses, at 29%. Again, having translated a more diverse pool of items was predictive of stronger acculturation to one's heritage culture, $B = .10$, $p = .009$. Specifically, controlling for the effects of brokering frequency, people translated for, and family connectedness, every additional item translated was associated with an increase of .10 points in heritage culture acculturation. None of the other two predictors were significant. It should be noted, however, that Step 2 accounted only for a marginally significant increase in variance explained, $\Delta F = 2.53$, $p = .06$.

LB and empowerment

The same model tested above was examined in predicting empowerment that is associated with brokering, where each step accounted for a significant proportion of variance (Table 5). Overall, this model accounted for 16% of the variability in responses. Only the number of people translated for, however, significantly predicted feelings of empowerment, with individuals who translate for a more varied group of individuals reporting stronger empowerment, $B = .15$, $p = .03$. In other words, for every additional individual one translates for, the empowerment score is expected to increase by .15 points, controlling for the effects of brokering frequency, items translated, and family connectedness. None of the other predictors was related to empowerment.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to better understand the South Asian Canadian LB experience, in particular how that experience relates to acculturation to mainstream and heritage cultures, and its relationship to personal empowerment. South Asian Canadians constitute one of the largest immigrant groups in Canada and they demonstrate a vibrant

ethnolinguistic vitality in the metropolitan area of Toronto where this study was conducted.

In line with literature on young-adult language brokers (e.g. Weisskirch 2013; Weisskirch et al. 2011), we found that LB is a common occurrence among many bicultural young adults. Different from children or adolescents, young adults generally possess more developed language and communication skills, as well as better social and cognitive skills. Further, they are more knowledgeable about various issues and are thus better suited to discuss about these issues compared to children or early adolescents. Also supporting previous research (e.g. Tse 1995, 1996; Weisskirch and Alva 2002), findings point to LB as a rich and diverse phenomenon, which includes various people and institutions and takes place in different locations and across a number of domains. Young bicultural language brokers in Canada report translating primarily not only for their parents, grandparents, or relatives but also for other people. Further, they translate a number of different items, from those requiring mainly linguistic skills (e.g. a utility bill) to more complex linguistic and cultural knowledge (e.g. jokes).

Interestingly, when examining the link between LB and acculturation, we did not find any relationship between frequency of brokering and acculturation to either mainstream or heritage cultures. This is surprising given the results of past research, which, despite being inconsistent, have always found a relationship between the two. There are two likely explanations that may account for these findings. First, in the present study we used a measure of acculturation that differed in two important ways from measures used in previous studies. Specifically, while it is plausible that mere frequency of brokering could be related to measures of acculturation that are predominantly based on language proficiency (e.g. Buriel et al. 1998; Weisskirch 2005, 2007; Weisskirch and Alva 2002; Weisskirch et al. 2011), the relationship between frequency of brokering and acculturation as measured in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviours is less straightforward. In other words, more experience with LB – which follows from a higher brokering frequency – may in fact improve one's mainstream or heritage language proficiency, thus yielding higher scores on measures of acculturation that rely heavily on knowledge of language. Simple brokering frequency, however, might not necessarily mean that these bicultural young adults will more strongly align themselves with other mainstream or heritage cultural practices. Nor does it necessarily imply a stronger preference for embracing particular cultural values, or friendship groups, or marrying someone from a particular cultural group – some of the elements that comprised the measure of acculturation used in this study. Also, in the present study we assessed and analysed mainstream and heritage acculturation separately, as independent from each other, unlike in previous research where the two were typically measured and/or analysed together, yielding a single acculturation score. A second likely explanation for the observed lack of relationship between brokering frequency and acculturation could relate to the specific nature of brokering that may be taking place among many South Asians in Canada. For our participants and the people they broker for, translating to and from English might be a fairly normative experience. Many of our participants identified themselves as either Indian or Pakistani. In other words, they and their parents come from countries where English is already an official language. It is thus likely that brokering, in one form or another, has been a more customary part of daily life for our participants and their families, compared to the brokering experiences of Latinos, who have been at the centre of LB studies. Thus, the specific population examined in the present study might be a plausible reason why frequency of brokering in itself does not predict levels of acculturation to either culture, mainstream or heritage. There is some preliminary

evidence that lends support to this account. Specifically, other research on LB conducted in our laboratory, using the same measures of brokering intensity and acculturation employed in this study, found that brokering frequency was in fact negatively related to acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture among East Asian Canadians, although no relationship was observed between frequency of brokering and acculturation to the heritage culture (Cila and Lalonde 2012). Frequency of brokering, thus, might be an important indicator of acculturation, but only among certain cultural groups.

Importantly, we found that the more diverse the repertoire of items translated, the higher the reported heritage and mainstream acculturation. This might be because translating different types of items exposes the language broker to a wide range of information and knowledge about both cultures, including knowledge about norms and values, customs, and traditions. In other words, the language broker may feel more immersed in both cultures as he or she engages in brokering situations. Such immersion may lead to a greater sense of understanding and acceptance of both cultures, which may eventually imply a stronger identification with both heritage and mainstream cultures. Future research may empirically test the presence of the suggested mediational path. Regarding our third indicator of brokering, the diversity of people one translates for, we did not find any significant relationship between this indicator and acculturation to either culture. It would thus seem that the number of people one brokers for does not have any effect on levels of reported acculturation, once the relationship between the other predictors and acculturation has been accounted for. It appears that what is being brokered, rather than for whom, matters most for how acculturated one is to both mainstream and heritage cultures.

The third outcome variable examined in this study was personal empowerment as it relates to the practice of LB. Here we found that the larger the pool of people one translates for, the more empowerment one reports experiencing. Being able to assist other people through brokering might be a plausible route to empowerment for these young adults, making them feel not only more mature but also more personally and culturally competent. Previous research has also pointed in this direction. Tse (1995, 1996; McQuillan and Tse 1995) was among the first to discuss the experience of brokering in relation to increased feelings of maturity and independence, two key concepts that we also used in our conceptualization of empowerment. Buriel and colleagues (1998) also found a positive relationship between brokering and social self-efficacy. As the authors argue, 'interpersonal experiences with two languages and two cultures may impart enhanced feelings of self-confidence in social interactions' (293). Contrary to some research suggesting a link between frequency of brokering among emerging adults and self-efficacy (e.g. Weisskirch 2013), we found no such relationship. In other words, we found that mere frequency of brokering is not related to feelings of empowerment. In fact, research suggests that, at least for some, brokering might be experienced as a sense of burden or stress (McQuillan and Tse 1995; Tse 1995, 1996), which might counteract any feelings of empowerment that brokering could yield. Our data suggest that instead of frequency of brokering, it is the experience of brokering for a diverse pool of individuals that results in higher empowerment.

Limitations and future research directions

Despite the potential contributions of the present research, some limitations need to be noted. First, results obtained with this sample might not generalise well to a larger population. In particular, in this study we included participants who self-identified as

South Asian. South Asia, however, is a broad category and it is possible that LB experiences and their correlates might be different for individuals of different national (e.g. Indian, Pakistani), or perhaps more importantly, different linguistic groups (e.g. Hindi, Urdu). Another limitation regards the cross-sectional nature of this study. Longitudinal studies would be especially useful in enhancing our understanding of the relationship between LB and acculturation as well as empowerment. Third, in this study we conceptualised empowerment as encompassing concepts such as maturity, independence, and cultural competence, among others. It is worth noting, however, that empowerment should be related to other psychological variables such as well-being, mental health, and adjustment, which might be particularly important among bicultural youth and emerging adults. Lastly, future research might focus on a specific instance of LB, namely cultural brokering (Cila, Lalonde, and Haqanee 2011), which might be important for better understanding how the complex process of acculturation is related to the practice of LB.

Conclusions

We believe that the present study has made some theoretical and methodological contributions to the LB literature. We adopted a comprehensive approach to the practice of LB that does not rely simply on the frequency of brokering, and we showed how these different indices might be differentially related to acculturation and empowerment. Further, our measure of acculturation went beyond conceptualizations of acculturation as primarily language competency and captured more attitudinal and behavioural aspects of this process. We also added to the repertoire of language brokers that have been studied, by sampling South Asian Canadians. This study suggested that LB is related to mainstream and heritage acculturation primarily through the diverse information and knowledge that is encountered and transmitted when brokering, and that a sense of personal empowerment is related to brokering for multiple individuals. The mechanisms or processes that facilitate these relationships, however, remain an open question for future research.

Funding

This work was supported in part by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) CGS doctoral scholarship [grant number 767-2012-2297] to the first author.

Note

1. It should be noted that the present study is not the first to use a combination of various indices of LB. For instance, Buriel et al. (1998) did include a composite measure of brokering by summing up the persons, places, and items translated by language brokers. Nevertheless, in that study, Buriel and colleagues combined frequency of brokering with people/places/items translated. Specifically, participants were asked to report on their frequency of brokering particular items, for particular people, in particular places. In the present study, we examine frequency as separate from those other indices. In addition, Buriel et al. (1998) used stepwise regression to analyse their data, a technique that is usually criticised for capitalising on chance (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007), whereas we used hierarchical regression, which relies on the inclusion of theoretically relevant predictors. Weisskirch (2005) also examined the relationship between frequency of brokering for different individuals (thus combining brokering frequency with the pool of individuals translated for or institutions where brokering has happened) and types of items translated. We do believe, however, that it is important to look at these components of brokering separately, and in addition to the frequency of brokering.

References

- Arnett, J. J. 2000. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties." *American Psychologist* 55: 469–480. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469.
- Berry, J. W. 1997. "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46: 5–68.
- Berry, J. W. 2005. "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29: 697–712. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013.
- Berry, J. W., J. S. Phinney, K. Kwak, and D. L. Sam. 2006. "Introduction: Goals and Research Framework for Studying Immigrant Youth." In *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity and Adaptation across National Contexts*, edited by J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. S. Sam, and P. Vedder, 1–14. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Buriel, R., W. Perez, T. L. De Ment, D. V. Chavez, and V. R. Moran. 1998. "The Relationship of Language Brokering to Academic Performance, Biculturalism, and Self-efficacy among Latino Adolescents." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 20 (3): 283–297. doi:10.1177/07399863980203001.
- Cila, J., and R. N. Lalonde. 2012. "Language Brokering and Acculturation among East Asian Canadians: Evidence from a Young Adult Sample." Poster presented at the 14th National Metropolis Conference "Future Immigration Policies: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada," Toronto, Ontario, Canada, February 29–March 3.
- Cila, J., R. N. Lalonde, and Z. Haqanee. 2011. "Cultural Brokering and Bicultural Identity: An Exploratory Study." Poster presented at the international conference "Taking Stock of a Turbulent Decade and Looking Ahead: Immigration in North America 2000–2010," London, Ontario, Canada, April 28–30.
- Dion, K. L., and K. Kawakami. 1996. "Ethnicity and Perceived Discrimination in Toronto: Another Look at the Personal/Group Discrimination Discrepancy." *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement* 28 (3): 203–213. doi:10.1037/0008-400X.28.3.203.
- Giles, H., R. Y. Bourhis, and D. M. Taylor. 1977. "Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations." In *Language, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Relations*, edited by H. Giles, 307–348. New York: Academic Press.
- Houle, R. 2011. "Recent Evolution of Immigrant-language Transmission in Canada." *Canadian Social Trends – Statistics Canada – Catalogue No. 11-008*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2011002/article/11453-eng.pdf>.
- Hua, J. M., and C. L. Costigan. 2012. "The Familial Context of Adolescent Language Brokering within Immigrant Chinese Families in Canada." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41: 894–906. doi:10.1007/s10964-011-9682-2.
- Jones, C. J., and E. J. Trickett. 2005. "Immigrant Adolescents Behaving as Culture Brokers: A Study of Families from the Former Soviet Union." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 145: 405–428. doi:10.3200/SOCP.145.4.405-428.
- Lalonde, R. N., J. Cila, E. Lou, and B. Giguere. 2013. "Delineating Groups for Cultural Comparisons in a Multicultural Setting: Not All Westerners Should be Put into the Same Melting Pot." *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement* 45 (4): 296–304. doi:10.1037/a0034257.
- Lalonde, R. N., M. Hynie, M. Pannu, and S. Tatla. 2004. "The Role of Culture in Interpersonal Relationships: Do Second-generation South Asian Canadians Want a Traditional Partner?" *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 35: 503–524. doi:10.1177/0022022104268386.
- Lay, C., P. Fairlie, S. Jackson, T. Ricci, J. Eisenberg, T. Sato, A. Teeäär, and A. Melamud. 1998. "Domain-Specific Allocentrism-Idiocentrism: A Measure of Family Connectedness." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 29: 434–460. doi:10.1177/0022022198293004.
- Martinez, C. R., H. H. McClure, and J. M. Eddy. 2009. "Language Brokering Contexts and Behavioral and Emotional Adjustment among Latino Parents and Adolescents." *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 29 (1): 71–98.
- McQuillan, J., and L. Tse. 1995. "Child Language Brokering in Linguistic Minority Communities: Effects on Cultural Interaction, Cognition, and Literacy." *Language and Education* 9: 195–215. doi:10.1177/0272431608324477.
- Ryder, A. G., L. E. Alden, and D. L. Paulhus. 2000. "Is Acculturation Unidimensional or Bidimensional? A Head-to-head Comparison in the Prediction of Personality, Self-identity, and Adjustment." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (1): 49–65.

- Statistics Canada. 2006. *Visible Minority Population, by Age Group* (2006 Canadian Census). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo50a-eng.htm>.
- Tabachnick, B. G., and L. S. Fidell. 2007. *Using Multivariate Statistics*. 5th ed. New York: Allyn and Bacon.
- Thomas, D. 2009. "Immigrants in Canada Who Work in a Language Other Than English or French." *Canadian Social Trends – Statistics Canada – Catalogue No. 11-008*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2009001/article/10770-eng.pdf>.
- Titzmann, P. F. 2012. "Growing Up too Soon? Parentification among Immigrant and Native Adolescents in Germany." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41: 880–893. doi:10.1007/s10964-011-9711-1.
- Tse, L. 1995. "Language Brokering among Latino Adolescents: Prevalence, Attitudes, and School Performance." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 17: 180–193. doi:10.1177/07399863950172003.
- Tse, L. 1996. "Language Brokering in Linguistic Minority Communities: The Case of Chinese- and Vietnamese-American Students." *Bilingual Research Journal* 20: 485–498. doi:10.1080/15235882.1996.10668640.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2005. "The Relationship of Language Brokering to Ethnic Identity for Latino Early Adolescents." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 24: 369–378.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2007. "Feelings about Language Brokering and Family Relations among Mexican American Early Adolescents." *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 27: 545–561. doi:10.1177/0272431607302935.
- Weisskirch, R. S. 2013. "Family Relationships, Self-esteem, and Self-efficacy among Language brokering Mexican American Emerging Adults." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 22: 1147–1155. doi:10.1007/s10826-012-9678-x.
- Weisskirch, R. S., and S. A. Alva. 2002. "Language Brokering and the Acculturation of Latino Children." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 24: 369–378. doi:10.1177/0739986302024003007.
- Weisskirch, R. S., S. Y. Kim, B. L. Zamboanga, S. J. Schwartz, M. Bersamin, and A. J. Umaña-Taylor. 2011. "Cultural Influences for College Student Language Brokers." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 17 (1): 43–51.
- Wu, N. H., and S. Y. Kim. 2009. "Chinese American Adolescents' Perceptions of the Language Brokering Experience as a Sense of Burden and Sense of Efficacy." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38: 703–718. doi:10.1037/a0021665.

Appendix. Empowerment scale

	Items
1	I think that translating has helped me to better understand people from other cultures ^a
2	Translating helped me understand my heritage culture better ^b
3	Translating helped me understand Canadian culture better ^b
4	The more I translate, the better I like Canadian culture
5	The more I translate, the better I like my heritage culture
6	Translating helped me learn my heritage language ^b
7	Translating helped me learn English ^b
8	Translating has helped me make new Canadian friends
9	Translating has helped me make new friends from my ethnic group
10	Translating made me feel more independent ^b
11	Translating helped me mature ^b

^aItem adopted from Weisskirch and Alva (2002).

^bItems adapted from Tse (1996).

The rest of the items were developed by the authors. A few changes were made to some of the items originally provided by Tse (1996), mainly relating to the wording of the items (e.g. we used the term 'translate' instead of the original 'broker' for ease of understanding).