



RECORDING VOICES: STORIES OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN YOUTH AS LANGUAGE BROKERS IN NEW YORK CITY

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Immigrant communities and communities of color often struggle with accessing public services in New York City. These struggles are magnified in the Asian Pacific American community because of language barriers. Limited English proficient parents are frequently forced to rely on children and youth in order to navigate through the vital health, education, and human service systems of New York City. This means that language barriers affect not only limited English proficient parents but also their children. These children and youth, who have the burden of translating and interpreting for their families, are called language brokers.

Language brokering is not merely the ability to speak two languages. Language brokering means that bilingual youth are translating and interpreting in daily situations without any special trainingⁱ and are bridging between the home culture and American culture.ⁱⁱ The role of youth in connecting their limited English proficient parents to the outside world extends beyond communicating the information verbatim. Youth often influence the content and messages presented. Parents rely on this information to make family decisions or assign the decision-making responsibility on the youth themselves. While language brokering is common in immigrant families, native-born individuals who have not mastered English or who lack the confidence in their language skills may also rely on their children to broker communication if a situation exceeds their English proficiency.ⁱⁱⁱ

Of all racial groups in New York City, Asian Pacific Americans have the highest percentage (28%) to live in linguistically isolated households. Linguistic isolation means that no one over the age of 14 in a household speaks English well. Approximately 35% of Asian Pacific American children (less than 18 years of age) live in linguistically isolated households.^{iv} Children in these linguistically isolated families are often the first to attend school in the United States and to receive daily exposure to the English language, so they become responsible for bridging communication between the home and institutions outside the household. While there is research on linguistic isolation, current research does not provide a clear picture of the impact of language brokering on the Asian Pacific American community. Limited research has been conducted on the individuals assisted by the youth, the materials translated, the conversations interpreted, and the emotional impact on youth and their families.

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) initiated this study to capture the experiences of language brokers from a pan-Asian perspective in New York City. CACF chose to focus primarily on the health and education systems in this study because 1) Asian Pacific American families have high interactions with these systems and 2) these systems can help to improve the well-being of Asian Pacific American families.

This policy brief:

- Assesses the frequency, materials, and situations of language brokering by Asian Pacific American youth.
- Explores the impact of language brokering on Asian Pacific American youth and parents.
- Examines language brokering from the perspective of community based providers.
- Provides recommendations to increase support to Asian Pacific American youth providing language assistance to adults.

I. ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN COMMUNITY

As the most diverse and fastest growing racial group for the past three decades, almost 1 million Asian Pacific Americans live New York City. Over 50 languages are spoken among the 40 ethnic groups included in the Asian Pacific American community. Comprising 91% of the Asian Pacific American community, the six largest Asian ethnic groups in New York City are Chinese (43%), Asian Indians (24%), Koreans (10%), Filipinos (7%), Pakistanis (4%), and Bangladeshi (3%).

The Asian Pacific American community is dispersed throughout the five boroughs of New York City. For example, the Bronx is home to Cambodian and Vietnamese communities. In Queens, many Filipinos reside in Woodside, the South Asian community has formed ethnic enclaves in Elmhurst and Jackson Heights, and Koreans and Chinese have established similar communities in Flushing. Chinese also live in Chinatown, Manhattan, and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Asian Pacific Americans are a bimodal community which can be found on

the extremes of socioeconomic indicators – from wealth to poverty, from advanced education to illiteracy, from entrepreneurial success to marginal survival.^v

Immigration Status

Immigration history also adds to the intricacy of the Asian Pacific American community. Among all racial groups in New York City, Asian Pacific Americans have the highest proportion of foreign-born (78%).^{vi} In fact, most Asian immigrants (82%) came to New York City in the past 20 years.^{vii} As a predominantly immigrant community, Asian Pacific Americans struggle with limited English skills.

Poverty

Poverty takes into account both household size and household income. For example, a four-person household living in poverty earns less than \$21,200 per year, while a six-person household living in poverty earns less than \$28,400 per year.^{viii} Asian Pacific Americans have the second highest poverty rate (25.9%) of all racial groups in New York City.^{ix} Over half (54%) of Asian Pacific American children born in New York City were born into poor families. Furthermore, 24% of Asian Pacific American children in New York City live below the poverty line, and the vast majority (80%) of these children live in two-parent households, much higher in comparison to the general population of children in New York City.^x There is a correlation between poverty and limited English proficiency, as the socioeconomic status of Asian Pacific Americans is in part due to their skill set, which includes English language proficiency. Employability, earnings, and opportunities for advancement are impacted by English proficiency.

Household Characteristics

Household size significantly impacts household income, per capita income, and housing conditions in the Asian Pacific American community. Asian Pacific American households, on average, are comprised of 3.13 people, though this number varies by ethnic group. For example, household size is higher for Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (4.3 and 4.1, respectively) in comparison to the citywide average (2.59 people).^{xi} This trend is similar for other Asian Pacific American ethnic groups.

Though Asian Pacific Americans in New York City have higher family incomes than the general population (\$41,901 and \$41,887, respectively), Asian Pacific Americans lag behind the general population in terms of per capita income. In other words, Asian Pacific American households have higher family incomes because there are more wage earners in these households. For example, the city-average household had 1.1 workers while Filipino households had 1.6 workers and Pakistani households had 1.5 workers.^{xii} Given the variation in the number of wage earners in a household, per capita income provides a more accurate picture of the economic conditions of Asian Pacific American families. Asian Pacific American per capita income is \$18,416 compared to the \$22,402 citywide per capita income. This is less than two times the federal poverty level. Given these economic characteristics, Asian Pacific American households need to have access to the safety net system of New York City.

Education

Contrary to the model minority stereotype of universal success, there are considerable educational disparities within the Asian Pacific American community. Despite 50 percent of

Asian Pacific Americans having a graduate degree, 31 percent of Asian Pacific American adults in New York City do not have a high school diploma. Almost 1 in 5 Asian Pacific American students in New York City public schools did not receive a high school diploma.^{xiii} Several members of the Asian Pacific American community may lack not only English skills but also native language skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are common themes across the limited body of research on language brokers. First, language brokers facilitate communication most often for their parents, other family members, teachers, or other adults.^{xiv} Generally, language brokers help their families access information, knowledge, and resources in three main domains: health, education, and activities for daily living. In a medical/health context, Orellana et. al. reported that youth provide language assistance from interpreting when scheduling appointments and during medical exams to translating insurance forms, instructions for medicine, and other health care products. Language brokers also facilitate communication in a school context, interpreting during parent-teacher conferences as well as translating written school notices and forms.^{xv} Youth also negotiated interactions between two parties in adult situations, such as negotiating rental agreements, translating bank or insurance information, and disputing phone bills.^{xvi} In addition, youth translated business documents, ordered household services, such as cable or phone service, and interpreted during commercial transactions.

Previous research is inconclusive as to the impact of language brokering on youth development. Youth adapt to the role of language broker with mixed results. Some researchers argue that because language

brokers provide language assistance in situations that require a high level of understanding – including during parent-teacher conferences and with bank/credit card statements, government documents, and insurance forms – they develop a more sophisticated vocabulary and have stronger problem-solving skills. As a result, language brokers may develop strong feelings of self-sufficiency and autonomy. In a study of Chinese and Vietnamese American language brokers, youth reported strong feelings of independence and maturity.^{xvii} In situations which require the youth to switch from being a child to the role of adult in order to translate or interpret for adult family members, language brokers may be considered more adult-like in these situations and may be viewed as the decision-maker for the entire family.

Conversely, language brokers may feel caught between two cultures when forced to mediate in very stressful and difficult situations. As decision-maker for the family, youth may be selective about the information they translate, especially for parents. While youth feel empowered within the family, many youth reported feeling burdened to make decisions for adults.^{xviii} Similarly in a study by Weisskirch and Alva, language brokers did not find the experiences helpful or enjoyable, and for the majority of the time, they did not feel good about translating and interpreting.^{xix} Youth found this process to hinder their psychological as well as academic development.

The literature also shows a discrepancy in the impact which language brokering has on academic performance. Earlier studies suggest that language brokering is not correlated with academic performance. In a study of Latino students, Tse reported no association

between language brokering and academic performance.^{xx} However, other studies show stronger linguistic abilities and comprehension skills may positively impact a language broker's academic performance. In a study of Spanish-speaking youth in urban settings, language brokers scored better on standardized reading and math tests. In addition, language brokers reported higher levels of language proficiency in both their primary and secondary languages, and language brokering was positively correlated with academic performance in high-school age students.^{xxi} The accelerated cognitive skill development allows language brokers to perform better in school than their non-brokering peers. However, a study by Umana-Taylor found that language brokers were at higher risk of academic failure and experienced limited potential for academic and occupational achievements.^{xxii}

Mental health professionals, social scientists, policymakers, educators, and professionals in the medical field are divided on the impact of language brokering on the psychological and emotional health of youth.^{xxiii} Some suggest that language brokering has a positive impact on emotional well-being and enhances the parent-child relationship. In Orellana's study, youth viewed their role as language brokers as normal behavior and participated in the decision-making process in order to protect their families.^{xxiv} Similarly, language brokers reported feelings of compassion and providing language assistance helped youth understand their parents' struggles.^{xxv} Language brokers actively advocated for their parents' rights during complex interactions and felt stronger bonds with their parents in these situations.

On the other hand, research has shown language brokering to have a negative impact on the parent-child relationship and on the

youth's emotional development. In a study by Weisskrich and Alva, youth devalued their language brokering activities and reported that it hindered their acculturation process.^{xxvi} Youth reported feelings of stress, frustration, and obligation in these situations. In addition, youth also indicated that they were hindering their parents' development by providing language assistance. Parents in language brokering situations were forced to depend on their children, leading to unhealthy role reversals in which parents rely on their children. Youth do not choose to be language brokers but rather this role is assigned to them by adult family members. The burden to make decisions on behalf of the entire family place children in a double-bind position of not feeling competent to interpret in situations but at the same time trying to meet parental expectations.

III. VOICES OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN YOUTH AND PARENTS

Using children to translate and interpret in English-only settings is a common occurrence in limited English proficient Asian Pacific American families. The youth's quote below captures the experience of many language brokers in the Asian Pacific American community in New York City. Through surveys and focus groups, youth shared their experiences with being a language broker. (More information on the methodology is in Appendix A.)

“As long as English is involved, we are needed.”

– *Chinese American youth, 20-years-old*

Birth Order of Language Brokers

In the study, there was a difference among the Asian Pacific American youth's experiences as to how long they had been providing language assistance to their parents. Some youth said that they had been interpreting for their parents all of their lives while others noted that it had not been as long. This variation in experience could be partially due to the youth's birth order. Focus group participants who were oldest in their families reported providing oral language assistance more often for their parents than youth second or third in their familial birth order. Asian Pacific American youth agreed that while there are other family members available to interpret, parents usually relied on the oldest child in the family in those situations. One youth stated, “I'm the oldest. [There is a] big age difference [between me and my siblings, so] my mom comes to me.” Another explained, “Even though my brother is only one year younger, they put more responsibility on me.” Asian Pacific American youth identified parental perception of their children's bilingual capability and availability compared to other siblings as two reasons that their parents relied on them to be their primary translator. One youth explained, “Because I'm older, my parents assume I know more.” Other youth described having stronger Asian language conversational and comprehension skills than younger siblings.

Asian Pacific American youth who were younger siblings said that their parents asked them to play the role of translator when an older sibling was not available. For example, younger siblings would become language brokers when an older sibling moved away for college or work. Younger siblings acknowledged that they deferred the “head translator” role to their older siblings. One

youth noted that her older brother was the “more practical one” and that her parents asked her interpret only when he was not available. Asian Pacific American parents in the study agreed with the youth’s perception of older children having to assume the role of primary translator. Parents noted that the oldest child is often the most helpful because they have better command of vocabulary and comprehension in both the English and Asian languages.

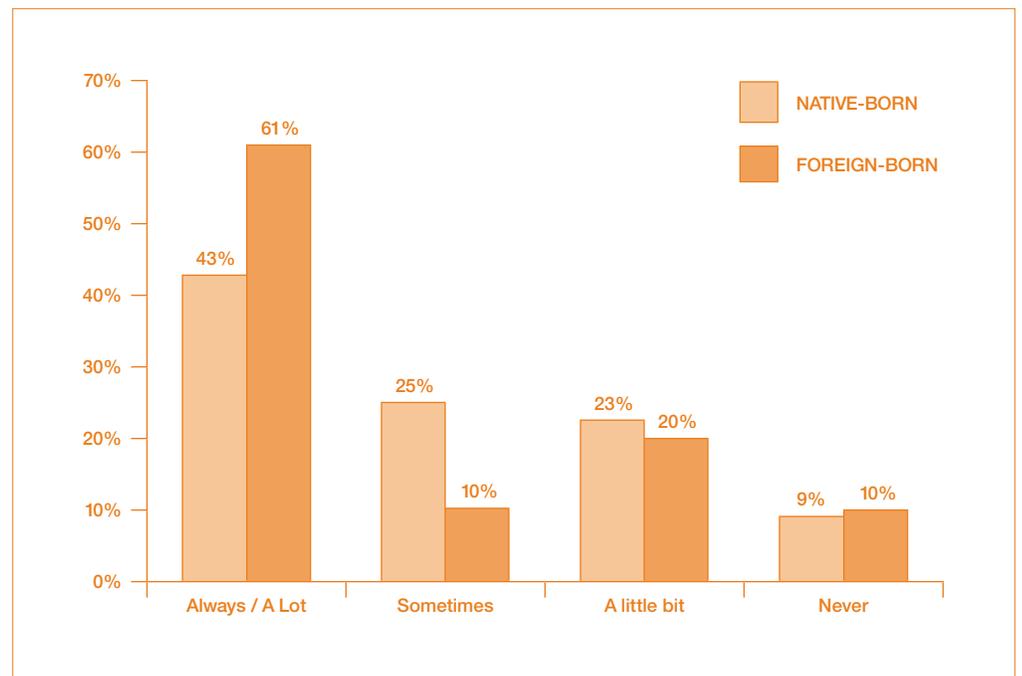
National Origin of Language Brokers

This study found that there is a difference between native-born and foreign-born Asian Pacific American youth in how often they interpreted for their parents (Graph 1). Immigrant youth provided oral language assistance for their parents more often than

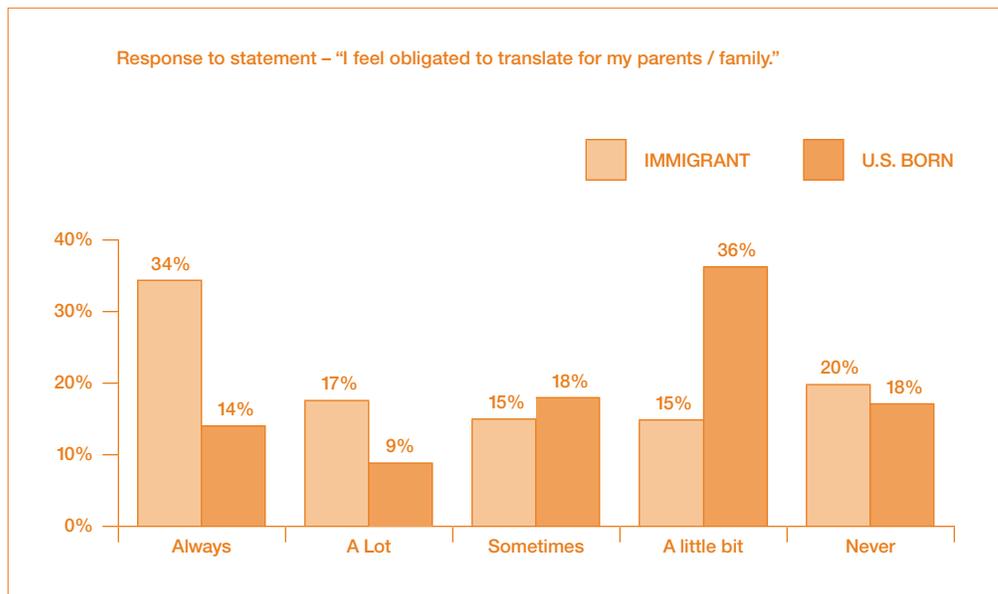
their native-born counterparts. This variation can be attributed to the degree to which an Asian Pacific American family has been in the United States and integrated into American society. For families who have been in the United States for a shorter period of time, language brokers are essential to family functioning and help the family navigate public and private domains. These youth are often the first members of their family to attend school in the United States and receive consistent exposure to the English language. Given that these youth have greater knowledge of American culture relative to their parents, they are given the responsibility of representing their families in English-only settings.

More foreign-born youth reported feeling obligated to translate for their parents or

Graph 1: Language Brokering by National Origin (N=85)



Graph 2: Feelings of Obligation to Translate by National Origin (N=85)



other adults than native-born youth (Graph 2). Asian Pacific American youth elaborated on this difference in the focus groups. As immigrant youth are often the first members of their families to be exposed to English on a regular basis, it is parental misperception that these youth have strong English language skills. Youth described parental expectations when needing assistance in English-only settings. According to one youth, parents moved to the United States “for a better life for their children” and expected their children to learn English. Many youth in the focus groups echoed this perception of parental expectations. One youth described her father pushing her to learn English while her mother encouraged her to memorize the dictionary. Another youth recalled her parent saying, “The only reason I sent you to school was because so you can read and help me translate.”

While both foreign-born and native-born Asian Pacific American youth reported being

language brokers for their parents, there are a number of interesting differences in the experiences of the two groups. First, immigrant youth are almost three times more likely to translate immigration forms and documents for their parents than native-born youth (61% vs. 20.5%, respectively). Among the immigrant youth who reported translating immigration documents for their parents, half are new immigrants who have resided in the United States for less than five years. Immigrant youth were also more likely than native-born youth to translate medical forms (61% vs. 49.4%), telephone bills (58.5% vs. 43.2%) and bank statements (58.5% vs. 45.5%). These results demonstrate the difficulty which immigrant families experience when accessing services needed to thrive in New York City. Youth from immigrant, Asian Pacific American families often must use their limited language skills and rely on minimal family and institutional support to navigate these public systems.

Situations for Language Brokering

Asian Pacific American youth reported that they provide oral and written language assistance for a variety of individuals. Youth acted as language brokers for adults, such as relatives, friends, other students, school staff, medical personnel, and strangers. The multiple parties for whom youth provide translation and interpretation were also a topic of discussion in the focus groups. One youth explained that she translated for “basically anybody who needs translation.” Table 1 ranks the individuals who receive language assistance from Asian Pacific American youth.

“[Being a language broker] feels like a 24/7 job.”

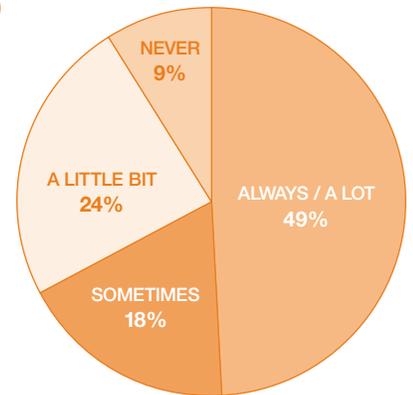
– Chinese American youth, 17-years-old

Table 1: Individuals for Whom Youth Translate/Interpret (N=89)

INDIVIDUALS	ALWAYS / A LOT
Parents	49%
Other relatives	25%
Teachers	16%
People who come to the door	12%
Doctors and/or nurses	11%
Other school personnel	8%
Shopkeepers	7%
Friends	6%
Siblings	5%
Strangers	3%

Graph 3: Frequency of Language Brokering (N=89)

How often do you translate for your parents?



Similar to findings in the literature, the survey results in Table 1 show that Asian Pacific American youth provided translation most frequently for their parents (49%). For example, youth interpreted for their parents over the phone to address household matters. One youth described this language brokering experience between his mother and the phone company by saying, “I had to be the middle person. I would listen to the operator, translate for my mother, listen to my mother, and then translate for the operator.” Other youth in the focus groups described similar experiences of negotiating two-way communication between their parents and customer service representatives. Graph 3 (previous page) shows that almost all Asian Pacific American youth (91%) interpreted to some extent for their parents.

Asian Pacific American youth also acknowledged that they translate the numerous written materials which their families encounter in their daily lives. Reading these materials is challenging for many families from this community, as 28% of Asian Pacific Americans do not speak English “well” or “at all,” the highest percentage of all racial groups in New York City.^{xxvii} In these linguistically isolated families, youth play a key role in mediating the relationship between parents and society. Given the range of individuals for whom youth interpret, the types of materials which youth translated also vary (Table 2).

Table 2: Communication Translated/ Interpreted by Youth (N=89)

SITUATIONS / MATERIALS	%
Notes/letters from school	83.1%
On the phone	66.3%
Instructions for new equipment	57.3%
Bank statements	49.4%
Telephone bills	49.4%
Forms from the doctor's office	49.4%
Credit card bills	48.3%
Insurance forms	46.1%
Immigration forms	39.3%
When someone comes to the door	30.3%
Job application	29.2%
Rental contracts	21.3%

In the focus groups, Asian Pacific American youth expanded on the types of written materials which they translated. Youth described translating insurance forms, credit card statements, bills, and immigration documents. Many began translating written materials at a young age. One youth noted, “Ever since second grade, I started going through the letters...I take charge. I pay the rent, so I write the check.” Another youth described a similar role in her family, “I handle most of, like, everything including [my mom’s] credit card bills, medical [bills], and insurance forms.” Other youth explained that they not only translate documents which come in the mail but also accompany other family members to translate documents or interpret conversations in English-only settings. One youth explained that he accompanies his parents to the government

agencies where they issue “the social security card and benefit cards. I go there and translate for them.”

“I kept repeating in English, hoping that my mom would understand.”

– *Korean American youth, 17-years-old*

Although Asian Pacific American youth reported taking responsibility for going through mail and paying bills, many expressed difficulty in translating these materials because 1) youth lacked the knowledge or vocabulary to provide adequate language assistance and 2) terminology used in the written documents did not have a translation into the Asian language. One youth said, “You just don’t know how to say it in your native language.” Another youth said, “Sometimes we read a letter, and we understand [it]. But we don’t know how to say it in Chinese.” Another youth explained difficulties translating health insurance forms by stating, “There would be lots of things that I wouldn’t understand, but my mom would be expecting me to understand them and tell her what that meant.” Reading credit card statements are also challenging for many youth because they may not understand the terminology. One youth explained that “when we were in China, not [many] people used credit cards,” so he could not provide an exact translation into Chinese. Another youth described her experience at the immigration office as, “There’s a whole long line of people waiting after you. And you have to get [the information] and understand it so that both [her parents and the employee] understand.”

“I’m not an expert in Korean or English. I don’t want to make mistakes.”

– *Korean American youth, 16-years-old*

Relationship between Youth and Parents

Asian Pacific American youth in the focus groups reported having limited opportunities to interact with their parents because many parents worked long hours. Providing oral and written language assistance was an opportunity for many youth to talk with their parents. As a language broker, youth felt that they were able to discuss family problems and have an “exchange of opinions” with their parents. Other youth felt that as a language broker, they were able to bridge the communication gap between themselves and their parents. Youth felt “honored” and “trusted” by parents in situations in which they provided language assistance to their parents. Another youth concurred that being a language broker allowed him to “create trust” between his parents and him, while another youth explained that being a language broker allowed her to “know what’s going on in the family.”

Many Asian Pacific American youth in the focus groups felt protective of and had a sense of responsibility toward their family. One youth questioned her parents’ ability to manage a crisis situation because of their limited English proficiency by asking, “In case of an emergency, if I am not there, how could they handle the situation?” Other Asian Pacific American youth described wanting to protect their parents from being discriminated against because of their limited English proficiency. One youth stated, “I don’t want anyone to look down on [my mother] just because she doesn’t know the [English] language a lot.” Youth in the focus groups felt that stronger family bonds were developed by being protective and assuming responsibility for their well-being of their parents.

Though Asian Pacific American youth acknowledged that they provide language assistance out of wanting to protect and care for their parents, many also said that they were overwhelmed by their parents' dependence on them. Survey results show that 66% of youth surveyed have provided language assistance in situations despite feeling uncomfortable or incompetent. Additionally, 75% felt nervous in situations which required them to provide language assistance to their parents or other adults.

The responsibility that Asian Pacific American youth undertake in providing language assistance is, unfortunately, often accompanied by obligation and apprehension. Almost 80% of youth surveyed felt some level of obligation to translate for their parents or other family members (Graph 4). In the focus groups, youth elaborated upon their feelings of being burdened and expressed feelings of anxiety about miscommunication. One youth described her experience as a language broker as, "It gets annoying, but I mean, they are my family. I have to do it for them." Another youth noted that if he does not translate for his parents, "there is no one else to translate," indicating that youth feel obligated to provide

language assistance because of the lack of other language assistance options available to his family.

“Your parents are expecting you to do everything on your own. They never feel like we need support too.”

– Nepali American youth, 17-years-old

Some Asian Pacific American youth disagreed and felt that their role as language brokers hindered communication with their parents and, as a result, felt unsupported by their parents. In describing feeling disconnected from her parents, one youth said, "Your parents are expecting you to do everything on your own. They never feel like we need support too." Youth in the focus groups also described feeling disengaged from their parents in making important decisions regarding their educational future, such as during the college application process. One youth said that parents "don't understand where you are coming from." Many of the youth reported that their parents are unfamiliar with the college application process and consequently are not able to support

Graph 4: Feelings of Obligation to Translate (N=85)

Response to statement, "I feel obligated to translate for my parents / family."

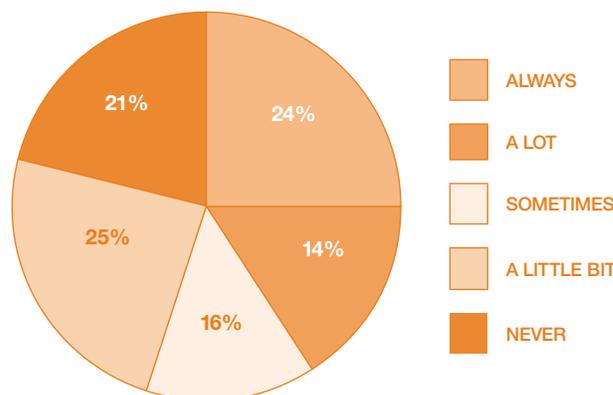


Table 3: Youth Attitudes Toward Language Brokering (N=89)

	AGREED WITH ALWAYS / A LOT (%)
Translating helps me care more for my parents	44.9%
I feel good about myself when I translate for others	39.3%
I feel obligated to translate for others	37.1%
Translating helped me understand my parents better	37.1%
Translating helped me learn my native language	37.1%
Translating makes me feel more grown up	32.6%
I have translate for others even when I don't want to	30.3%
I feel nervous when I have to translate for others	18.0%
My parents know more about the American culture because I language broker	18.0%
I like to translate	16.9%
Translating has helped me learn English	15.7%
My parents learned English faster because I translated for them	14.6%
Translating has helped me to better understand people who are not Asian	13.5%
My parents learned English slower because I translated for them	13.5%
I feel embarrassed when I translate for others	6.7%
My parents know less about the American culture because I language broker	4.5%

them during the application process. A youth justified these situations by saying, “You’re just, like, used to it – that they will not understand you.” Other youth in the focus groups described feeling resigned in similar situations.

Positive Impacts of Language Brokering

Asian Pacific American youth do not choose to be language brokers. Rather, this role is designated to them by their parents or other adults. Because of the lack of language assistance services in many public and private settings, limited English proficient Asian Pacific American parents are left to rely on

their children to mediate and access resources, knowledge, and information for their families. Youth’s bilingual skills allow them to intervene on behalf of English and Asian language speakers. According to the literature, language brokers experience both positive and negative impacts of providing language assistance to adults, from feelings of pride and safeguarding their parents to thoughts of burden and anxiety.

Table 3 outlines Asian Pacific American youth’s attitudes towards language brokering. (Appendix B includes a table comparing youth responses to all attitudinal statements in the language brokering scale.) Of survey

respondents, 39.3% of youth agreed that they felt good about themselves when providing language assistance. The youth also reported that their role as language brokers allowed them to care for their parents (44.9%) and provided them with an opportunity to understand their parents better (37.1%). These positive attitudes were verified in the youth focus groups as youth described feeling “smarter” and reported “that others looked up to” them when they provide language assistance to limited English proficient adults and peers. Some youth associated oral and written language assistance activities with their sense of worth and their contribution to their community. One youth explained that she actively provides language assistance to other community members and that by helping others she “has a place in society.” For many youth in the study, being a language broker enhances self-confidence in situations where youth were required to communicate in two languages.

Correspondingly, 32.6% of Asian Pacific American youth surveyed agreed that translating for others allows them to feel more grown-up. By assuming the responsibility for these tasks on behalf of their families, youth felt that they were able to learn more English and become more informed about “American culture”. One youth explained, “I’m getting to know how much money we spend and how much money we get. I feel like I’m growing up earlier than others because I know all those things already.” Many youth viewed being able to manage personal finances and navigate other household responsibilities as tasks that would help them become more independent from their families and prepare them for their future as adults living in New York City.

Improving English as well as their native language skills were also identified as positive

impacts of language brokering by the Asian Pacific American youth. Almost one-third of foreign-born youth (31.7%) in the study reported that their English comprehension and vocabulary skills improved by providing language assistance, while only 2% of native-born youth felt that being a language broker improved their English language skills.

As English is a second language for many immigrant youth, they viewed providing written and oral language assistance as an opportunity to bolster their English language skills. In the focus groups, foreign-born youth described providing oral and written language assistance as an opportunity to participate in the “U.S. system” and complete tasks typically designated to adults, such as opening a bank account, applying for credit cards, and leasing an apartment.

Similar percentages of foreign-born and native-born Asian Pacific American youth felt that providing language assistance helped them understand their native language (37.2% and 37.5%, respectively). One youth explained that “growing up in so many languages, [translating] is just a way for me to speak in that language and practice.” Asian Pacific American parents interviewed for the study expressed similar views about youth communicating in their Asian language. While parents in the study agreed that youth must be able to communicate in English in school and in settings outside of the family unit, parents stressed the importance for youth to maintain their Asian language skills. Parents believed that communicating in their Asian language allows youth to continue to be connected to their culture and heritage. This was echoed by one youth who noted that providing language assistance to her parents allowed her to maintain and enhance her appreciation of her Asian language and culture.

Asian Pacific American parents in this study also recognized the importance of balancing their child's bilingual language skills. For parents, English was essential for academic success, and the Asian language was necessary for maintaining their culture. Communicating with parents and other relatives was another reason that parents wanted their children to communicate in their Asian language. In addition to academic achievement, one parent felt that English proficiency would boost her child's self-esteem, help him gain confidence, and integrate into a new culture because they had recently immigrated to New York. To assist with her son's transition, this mother enrolled her son in an after school program so that he would learn English faster and gain more confidence communicating with others.

Negative Impacts of Language Brokering

Although Asian Pacific American youth recognized positive impacts of providing oral and written language assistance, youth also identified negative impacts of being language brokers including:

- Increased burden when providing language assistance
- Heightened anxiety, stress and fear of miscommunication
- Conflict within the family unit
- Role-reversal between parents and youth

Many Asian Pacific American youth reported that providing language assistance to their parents has become an obligation. One youth described that because she has been asked to translate on many occasions, translating has "become an obligation" and a "daily routine". Another youth viewed his role as a language broker as "a responsibility I've gotten used to. Even though [my mother] doesn't say it, I feel like I have to do it." When asked if he has

ever felt forced to translate or interpret for his parents, one youth responded, "You can't just say no." In this role ascribed by their parents, Asian Pacific American youth feel that they are expected -- even mandated -- to provide language assistance to parents and other adults.

"I have to do everything for them. I feel like a guardian for my parents."

– Korean American youth, 16-years-old

While youth are assigned language brokering duties by their parents or other adults, language brokering often reverses the traditional parent-child roles in Asian Pacific American families. Youth often take on the role as caregiver and authoritarian in English-only situations, while their parents become dependent on their children for information. Taking on the role of caregiver presented conflicting feelings for many of the Asian Pacific American youth in the study. Youth acknowledged the burdens they experienced as language brokers and described feelings of frustration and stress when not being able to accurately translate information for their parents, feeling the pressure of unrealistic expectations which parents have of youth as well as the shifting power dynamics between youth and parents.

Several Asian Pacific American youth expanded on the role reversals in their families in the focus groups. One youth said, "I have to do everything for them. I feel like a guardian for my parents." Another youth explained, "I have to make a lot of decisions myself. I'm taking more of the role of the parents." Many youth in the focus groups felt that because they had stronger English language skills and knew more

about American culture and society that they were better able to navigate systems than their parents. In addition, many youth acknowledged that their parents moved to the United States to provide a better life for their children and rationalized the role reversal as a way to repay their parents for the sacrifices which they made for their family.

As the designated spokesperson for the family, Asian Pacific American youth described making decisions affecting their entire family, with both positive and negative feelings. One youth said, “I judge, ‘Is this important to my dad?’”. Another youth described her decision-making responsibilities when searching for a new home after her family’s home had been destroyed in a fire. While a social worker assisted her family in the process, the youth explained, “I had to translate the whole situation – where we’re gonna live, how much is the rent. I had to do all those [things].” Youth also described assuming a decision-making role in simpler tasks, such as buying electronic equipment or choosing a phone plan.

“I know [my son] can’t translate everything.”

– *Chinese American parent*

Asian Pacific American parents in the study also acknowledged the difficulty which their children experience when acting as language brokers. One parent recognized that her son has difficulty in translating certain materials. Another parent viewed the situation from a different perspective. She said, “If my kids don’t understand, then I force her to ask again and again because it needs to get done. Even though my daughter doesn’t want to, I force her to ask this staff member and that

staff member in order to get the answer.”

The inconsistency in parental perceptions of language brokering indicates that Asian Pacific American parents may not fully understand the impact which language brokering has on their children.

Whether with simple or complex decisions, Asian Pacific American youth reported being held accountable if there was confusion or error with the task. One youth said that “I get blamed by my parents” when there was a negative outcome of his decisions. Other youth in the focus groups reiterated this theme of accountability and their powerlessness when problems arose during the decision-making process.

Language Brokering in Health Care Settings

In September 2006, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) enacted regulations strengthening patient’s rights to language assistance services in all hospitals. The New York State Code of Rules and Regulations Section 405.7 provides guidelines to hospitals, including inpatient, outpatient, and ambulatory services, on developing and implementing language assistance programs. The guidelines include specifications related to identification of primary language, signage, patient wait time for language assistance services, and restrictions on utilizing youth or non-trained personnel interpreting in the medical setting.^{xxviii}

“It’s hard to translate in a doctor’s office.”

– *Bangladeshi American youth, 17-years-old*

Despite these guidelines, Asian Pacific American parents in the study faced challenges

communicating with certain health providers. Because most of the parents reside in Asian ethnic enclaves in New York City, they sought primary care in their own neighborhoods from providers who could speak their Asian language. However, specialty care and medical testing were not always available in their neighborhood. Many parents experienced difficulty communicating when more extensive tests or emergency services were needed. One parent noted that while the support staff at her physician's office spoke Chinese, the doctors and nurses did not, causing difficulty in communicating her health needs.

“If I was in pain, I couldn’t explain the pain. I didn’t have enough words. Once I told the doctor I had back pain. He did a check-up and said, ‘No problem,’ and simply gave me pain killers to relieve the pain. But it didn’t help. I couldn’t tell him that I wanted an X-Ray.”

– Vietnamese American parent

The NYSDOH regulation also outlines parameters related to age, competency, and conflict of interest when selecting an interpreter. Youth under the age of 16 are not to be used as interpreters. However, the regulation does allow for youth under 16 years of age to provide language assistance services in emergency situations. In a study of general practitioners’ experiences with child interpreters, physicians cited lack of technical terminology, sensitivity, and complexity of the medical situations as reasons not to have youth interpret during medical visits.^{xxix} One 15-year-old Korean American youth shared his experience in the emergency room after his family was in a car accident by saying:

The thing that I hate about hospitals is that they don’t have their own translators. I was scared. Is [my mother] going to die? It was too shocking, and I couldn’t even translate at that moment. My mom was lying on the bed, my dad was lying on the bed, and my sister was lying on the bed. I’m the only one who is fine. I’m like...“Translate for whom?!?” I don’t understand what’s going on...I’m going crazy.

Many Asian Pacific American youth in the focus groups also said that they have been providing language assistance since they were very young, including as young as 5-years-old. These experiences are in direct violation of the NYSDOH regulation.

The NYSDOH regulation also mandates that an interpreter must be available within 20 minutes in a non-emergency situation and 10 minutes in emergency situations. However, this directive has not been the norm for Asian Pacific American families who want to access language assistance services. One in nine Asian Pacific American youth in the study reported interpreting frequently for doctors and/or nurses. One youth described how she took a relative to the hospital. “We had to wait for, like, 8 hours. Finally, at the end of the exam, [the doctors] were, like, ‘You have to tell this! Tell this!’ I didn’t understand what it means. I had to ask them, ‘What it means?’ It took me, like, a lot of times.” Another youth in the focus group explained, “Sometimes, even though I understand, it is hard to translate in my language. I had to ask the doctor over and over, like 5 times, and then explain it to my mom.” Asking medical personnel for clarification was echoed throughout the youth’s experiences.

“[I translate for my mother] about health care or insurance...Anything she can’t.”

– *Indonesian American youth, 17-years-old*

Many Asian Pacific American youth shared similar feelings of helplessness and uneasiness when translating in a health care setting. Youth noted that in situations requiring more advanced vocabulary, they often referred to online resources or Asian language dictionaries. In situations where these resources are not available, one youth noted, “You have no choice. You can’t do anything about it.”

“With a Vietnamese doctor, if I had problems or pain, I could tell him... I just simply cannot explain myself [to English-only doctors] due to my limited English.”

– *Vietnamese American parent*

Language Brokering in School Settings

In February 2006, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) created a Chancellor’s Regulation A-663 to mandate language access to the public school system for limited English proficient parents.^{xxx} In 2004, the DOE also established the Translation and Interpretation Unit, which offers translation of central and regional documents in eight languages (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu) and which contracts with companies to offer translation in less common languages and to provide interpretation in all languages for citywide events. The Chancellor’s Regulation

and the Translation and Interpretation Unit mirror other state and local education regulations recognizing the needs of limited English proficient parents.^{xxxii, xxxiii}

“Teachers call me and ask, ‘What she is saying or he saying?’”

– *Tibetan American youth, 18-years-old*

Despite these regulations, 16% of Asian Pacific American youth surveyed in this study reported that they interpreted for teachers “always” or “a lot”. In school settings, youth interpret communication not only between parents and school personnel but also negotiate interactions between limited English proficient students and teachers. Youth explained that they are often called upon to mediate conversations between newly-immigrated students and school personnel. One youth gave an example of how school staff called upon “one Chinese and one Korean student” and asked them to determine a new limited English proficient student’s ethnicity and primary language. Another youth explained how she provided oral language assistance during a placement test for a new student from China.

Asian Pacific American youth acted as language brokers between home and school through written communication, telephone conversations, and parent/teacher conferences. Consistent with previous studies (Tse, 1996), parents and youth participating in the study acknowledged the role which youth play in mediating the communication between home and school. In the survey, 83.1% of youth reported that they translated school-related written materials. Examples of written documentation include school notices about educational options, permission slips, progress

reports, and report cards. One parent noted that her son's Asian language capability was only adequate enough to translate "simple letters". For more complex materials, parents said that they sought assistance from Asian Pacific American serving community based organizations or, in many cases, did not get the materials translated at all.

Asian Pacific American parents also acknowledged utilizing youth to interpret during in-person conversations with school personnel. One parent described a teacher asking a student to interpret a conversation when an interpreter was not available during a parent-teacher conference. Another parent was told to return on another day as school staff could not arrange for an interpreter after she had been waiting for over 90 minutes. While all parents interviewed acknowledged utilizing youth as language brokers in a school setting, they also recognized that it may be unsuitable for youth to negotiate these conversations. Parents said that having youth interpret may lead to inaccurate interpretation and may place a heavy burden on the youth. One parent explained, "Most of the time, the teacher just grabs a student in the class, and if it's a good thing [that the student has done], that would be ok. But if it's a bad thing [that the student has done], the youth won't translate back to you." Parents agreed that they did not "get the true picture" of their child's performance in school when their child or other youth interpreted for them in school settings.

"It's not telling a lie. It's telling a truth but not a whole truth."

– Chinese American youth, 16-years-old

Asian Pacific American youth in the study agreed with many of the parental perceptions

about language brokering in school settings. In situations which required youth to make decisions about their education, youth stated that they assessed the importance of the materials and translated only the necessary information or interpreted the information in a manner that benefited the youth. One youth explained how she had her mother sign a permission slip for a school activity without translating the document. In this situation, the youth paraphrased the information and had her mother sign the permission slip. Another youth described "leaving the negative stuff behind" in order to avoid negative consequences from his parents. Another youth explained that because his parents were unfamiliar with the American school system, he was able to influence his parents' perception of a poor grade in an advanced placement course to his advantage by saying that a poor grade was acceptable in such courses. Another youth said that he "left the negative stuff behind" when he interpreted his teacher's comments during a parent-teacher conference. Another youth described how she and her siblings spoke English in situations that she did not want her parents to understand. Scenarios like the ones described above illustrate that Asian Pacific American youth recognize the shift in power between parents and youth and, in certain situations, use the power difference to their own advantage.

Asian Pacific American youth also described translating school documents as "routine" and a part of everyday life. Other youth described the demand which family members placed on translating documents. One youth explained, "My [mother] just tells me to do it." Similar to other findings (Orellana et. al.), youth in this study translated not only the words but also the overall meaning of a document. Another youth described her parents' reliance on her for information by saying, "Unless I choose to tell [my parents], they won't know." In short,

many Asian Pacific American parents cannot fully participate in their child's education because of their limited English proficiency.

IV. VOICES OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

“I do know that translation [by youth] happens in schools, hospitals, and in the market place.”

– *Service Provider*

To expand upon the language brokering experiences of youth and parents, this study conducted interviews with service providers responsible for implementing health and social services in the Asian Pacific American community. The service provider's quote above summarizes their knowledge of language brokering by Asian Pacific American youth in New York City. Through interviews, service providers shared their perspective of language brokering in Asian Pacific American families. (More information on the methodology is in Appendix A.)

Impacts on Parents

The service providers interviewed felt that limited English proficient Asian Pacific American parents are caught in a “no-win situation” when it comes to language brokering. Because parents may not be aware of policies mandating language assistance services in public settings, service providers reported that parents feel uncomfortable or frustrated when they have to rely on their children to translate or interpret. At the same time, the providers said that parents utilize their children as language brokers because it is convenient and youth are readily accessible. One provider said, “I think [the parent] feels

it is unnecessary to call the counselor when [the parent] has a daughter who speaks perfect English.” Another service provider expanded on this theme by saying, “[Parents] are more familiar with their children, so it's easier. Children are right there. [Parents] have to reach out to institutions to see if there is any interpretation and that is another step [to take].”

Service providers reported that the consistency and quality of language assistance services influenced language brokering in Asian Pacific American families. One service provider said that language assistance services were “not 100% there for” the few parents aware of policies mandating translation and interpretation. Another service provider described the quality of language assistance services as “hit or miss.” Similarly, another provider said that parents often reverted back to relying on their children for translation and interpretation services because of their previous negative experiences with language assistance services from public agencies.

Impacts on Youth

All service providers in the study described situations where Asian Pacific American youth acted as language brokers for adults. Many providers discussed the negative implications of language brokering on the youth, including feelings of burden, guilt, and frustration. One service provider said, “I see students completely stressed out.” Another service provider said, “It's kind of a heavy burden for children because they have school and then come home and have to translate letters.”

Describing how youth in her program respond to the pressure of needing to know specialized terminology, one provider said, “These students feel a lot of pressure, and they know it is important. They do the best

they can. Sometimes they know they didn't translate it in the right way, but they had to do something." Another service provider said, "Sometimes [youth] understand and translate for their parents. But sometimes, [youth] struggle too because they are limited in their own language and hate translating from English to an Asian language." Another service provider summarized the burden and frustration of the youth in her program by saying, "[The youth] are the ones who need to get support and need help from the parents. But they may feel that they have to be there because their parents cannot even communicate to do little things, such as going to the banks or running errands. So they may feel that they have extra responsibilities."

Impacts on Families

Service providers also discussed the impact of language brokering on Asian Pacific American family dynamics. Service providers spoke about the role-reversal between youth and parents due to language brokering. Youth often influence the content of a conversation, filter information, and make decisions on behalf of the family. One provider said, "Kids have the power over what's been translated... Though it's unwanted power, the children have [it]." Another provider said, "[Youth] end up taking care of parents...and [become] parents to their younger siblings." Another provider explained that youth "mature really fast" as a result of these unwanted responsibilities. Service providers have witnessed the overdependence by the parent on the youth for language assistance, altering the decision-making authority within an Asian Pacific American family.

Language Access in Community Based Organizations

Service providers reported that within their community based organizations, services were offered in languages accessible to their Asian Pacific American client population. They did not need to call upon youth to language broker. However, providing translation and interpretation was offered on an ad hoc basis and was often not included in their job descriptions. Providing language assistance to limited English proficient clients therefore took the service providers away from their core programming responsibilities. Unfortunately, the providers recognized that Asian Pacific American parents rely on youth to be language brokers in situations external to the community based organization, such as hospitals, schools, and courts.

Service providers explained that Asian Pacific American youth often assume the role of family spokesperson. For example, one provider described a situation in which youth had to translate an incident with their landlord to the police. Another provider described how a youth translated for police during a domestic violence incident. The providers recalled several incidents when limited English proficient Asian Pacific American parents faced similar barriers when trying to access public benefits and public housing.

Language Access in Health Settings

Although New York State enacted regulations in September 2006 to provide language assistance services in all hospitals, the service providers reported that Asian Pacific American youth routinely provided language assistance in hospital and specialty care settings. The providers agreed with youth that there is not as much of a need for language assistance

services in primary care settings because many limited English proficient families access bilingual providers within their own neighborhoods. However, service providers confirmed the experiences of youth and parents in this study by reiterating the lack of specialty care providers who speak Asian languages. Many providers recounted incidents of youth providing language access services during emergency or specialty care visits. One provider said, “Hospitals advertise that they have interpretation services, but usually they don’t.” Another provider described the immense difficulty faced by a youth who had to interpret for a doctor to explain her mother’s chronic health condition.

Service providers identified two factors which impact the adequate provision of language assistance services for limited English proficient Asian Pacific American families in a medical setting: 1) parents’ lack of awareness of language assistance services and 2) medical staff’s lack of compliance with language access regulations. First, Asian Pacific American youth and parents often do not know that language assistance services are available. Parents have no other choice but to rely on their children for translation and interpretation. One provider said, “Lots of parents just expect that there aren’t any translation services available.” Another provider noted that youth in his program do not know their rights to language assistance services in medical settings. Even if there are translated signs, another provider said, “[Parents] don’t know where to go [because] their way of communication is more oral, rather than reading and writing because they may not be educated. They don’t know where they can go for doctors. They don’t get medicines.” This situation highlights that individuals may be not only limited in English proficiency but also illiterate in their native language.

Second, staff at medical facilities are often not aware of regulations mandating language assistance services. For example, one provider said, “Even if a language line is provided, [doctors] don’t know that it exists.” Another provider said, “Even though they said that you’re supposed to get a translator at the hospital, sometimes they can’t find one for you or the wait is long to get a translator.” Several providers reported that language assistance services in health settings are not available in all languages needed.

Language Access in School Settings

Research has shown that meaningful parent involvement is crucial to ensuring student success in school. However, many Asian Pacific American parents are unable to take part in their child’s education because of their limited English proficiency and because of language barriers to the school system. Despite state and local regulations mandating language access to the New York City school system, service providers described situations in which Asian Pacific American parents did not receive language assistance services during parent-teacher conferences or other interactions with school staff. One service provider said, “I have a client who cannot speak English. When her children get into trouble with the school, she will try to talk to the teacher about the situation. She writes down the situation on a paper, and she asks me to translate it for her.” Another provider explained how written materials like report cards, school notices, and letters were either translated or “forgotten about” by youth.

“Sometimes it’s [the stress of being a language broker] that affects their schooling. You see a lot of kids who don’t finish on time or take longer to finish.”

– *Service Provider*

Ultimately, language barriers impact an Asian Pacific American youth’s education because parents and teachers are unable to communicate about how to effectively support academic achievement. One service provider said, “The important things that need to be communicated don’t get communicated or don’t get followed up on because of language [barriers].”

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The stories of youth, parents, and service providers in this study illustrate how limited English proficiency impacts the Asian Pacific American community of New York City. While there are policies ensuring equal access to health, education, and human service systems for limited English proficient individuals, there remains a disconnect between the mere existence of language access policies and the actual provision of translation and interpretation services. Too often, Asian Pacific American youth assume the enormous responsibility of being the primary translator and interpreter for their families, as opposed to trained professionals who should fulfill this role. Language brokering leads to negative consequences for Asian Pacific American youth, their families, and the community.

Eliminating language barriers is important for not only limited English proficient Asian Pacific Americans but also all linguistically diverse New Yorkers. The public,

philanthropic, and non-profit sectors must collaborate to strengthen the implementation of language access policies and to maximize resources to provide quality translation and interpretation services.

To support Asian Pacific American language brokers and to promote equal access to essential services, CACF makes the following recommendations:

1. Resources – Increase funding for language assistance services in public settings to improve access for Asian Pacific American, immigrant, and linguistically diverse communities.

City and state agencies administering public programs must invest in developing high-quality translation and interpretation services to meet the language needs of not only the Asian Pacific American community but also other limited English proficient individuals. Hiring bilingual and bicultural staff ensures that linguistically diverse individuals have equal access to public services in their most comfortable language at all points of contact in a timely manner.

2. Monitoring – Implement a monitoring system to ensure that prompt and efficient language assistance services are being offered in all health, education, and human service systems.

Despite having policies and regulations mandating translation and interpretation services, Asian Pacific American youth continue to language broker for their limited English proficient parents. State and city agencies should develop a monitoring system

to ensure that existing language access policies are implemented efficiently and that language accessible services are being provided effectively. As a part of the monitoring system, state and city agencies should collect disaggregated information about requests for translation and interpretation services, the languages requested, and the type of language assistance provided. This information should be publicly available and in a format understandable to the general public.

3. Community Education – Educate the Asian Pacific American community on their rights to language assistance services.

Because immigrant families often lack awareness of language assistance services, state and city agencies must proactively inform the community about language access policies and regulations. Agencies should utilize multiple outreach strategies to conduct community education, including leveraging Asian ethnic media, working with faith-based organizations, and conducting peer education workshops. State and city agencies should also collaborate with community based organizations to educate immigrant parents on the potential negative impacts of language brokering on youth.

4. Training – Ensure that all individuals who have contact with Asian Pacific American families are knowledgeable about the availability of language assistance services and the procedures for accessing these services.

The lack of awareness about mandated language access policies and regulations extends beyond the Asian Pacific American community and includes staff at health,

education, and human service systems. Staff should be trained on how to identify language needs and to access language assistance services for limited English proficient individuals. Additionally, hospital staff should be aware of the regulation prohibiting a youth less than 16 years of age to provide language assistance services in a medical setting. Furthermore, staff of community based organizations are often the first point of contact for Asian Pacific American families. Staff should be trained to identify youth who language broker and to refer them to appropriate language assistance services.

5. Collaboration – Build partnerships with Asian Pacific American led and serving community based organizations to promote language access.

Community based organizations are often trusted by Asian Pacific American families because they are knowledgeable of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of this diverse community. State and city agencies should strengthen collaboration with community based organizations in order to remain updated on language access needs and to develop joint responses for ensuring equal access. Improved collaboration should lead to enhanced culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services for Asian Pacific American families

6. Capacity Building – Increase the capacity of Asian Pacific American led and serving community based organizations to serve limited English proficient individuals.

Many immigrant families often turn to community based organizations for language

assistance services in health, education, and human service settings. However, staff of community based organizations are forced to stretch their limited time and resources to provide language assistance to limited English proficient families. Public and philanthropic organizations should increase financial support to assist community based organizations to formalize their language assistance services. Increased funding would allow community based organizations to hire additional bilingual and bicultural staff, minimizing impacts on current staffing and programming. Because Asian Pacific American youth have the burden of being language brokers, community based organizations should also use the increased financial resources to expand their youth development programs, aiming to reduce potential negative effects of language brokering.

VI. CONCLUSION

Language barriers do not affect only limited English proficient parents; they also affect the children and youth in those families. Too often, Asian Pacific American youth serve as language brokers, mediating communication between family members with limited English proficiency and institutions outside the home. This study has shown that Asian Pacific American youth – native and foreign-born – are active participants in the household decision-making process. Language brokers access resources and information with minimal family and institutional support. It is imperative that public, philanthropic, and non-profit agencies collaborate to support language brokers and their families by investing in meaningful, effective language assistance services and practices. The recommendations in this policy brief are a blueprint to ensure that Asian Pacific American children, youth, and families have an equal opportunity to thrive in New York City.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of language brokering within the Asian Pacific American community in New York City, CACF utilized the following mixed-method approach:

- Administered a survey to 89 youth
- Conducted 8 focus groups with 54 youth
- Interviewed 6 parents
- Conducted in-depth interviews with 8 service providers at community based organizations serving Asian Pacific American families
- Surveyed an administrator at the Office of Limited English Proficiency/ Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

I. Surveys: CACF adapted the language broker scale developed by Buriel et. al. (1998) to assess the following:

- basic demographic information, including immigration history
- places where youth have translated
- materials translated
- attitudes towards language brokering

The language broker scale was administered to 89 youth recruited through community based organizations. Table 1 outlines the demographic information of the survey participants (N=89).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Youth Participants (N=89)

Age range:	15-23
Average age:	17.1
Gender: % (N)	Female – 56.2% (50) Male – 43.8% (39)
Language(s) spoken: % (N)	Chinese – 49.4% (44) English – 3.45% (3) Korean – 28.1% (25) Other Asian language – 2.2% (2) South Asian – 16.9% (15)
Immigration history:* % (N)	Foreign-born – 46.1% (41) U.S. born – 49.4% (44)

* 4 youth did not indicate their immigration history.

The average length of residence in the United States for immigrant survey respondents was 6.45 years with the range being from 1 year to 17 years. Of immigrant youth respondents:

- 50% reported being in the United States less than 5 years.
- 28.6% reported being in the United States between 6-10 years.
- 21.4% reported being in the United States for 11 or more years.

Youth surveyed reported speaking multiple Asian and non-Asian languages and dialects. Table 2 details languages and dialects spoken by survey participants.

Table 2: Languages and Dialects Spoken by Youth Survey Participants

LANGUAGE CATEGORY	LANGUAGE / DIALECT
Chinese	Cantonese Chiu Chau Fujianese Hakka Mandarin Toisanese
Korean	Korean
South Asian	Bengali Guajarati Hindi Nepali Punjabi Sherpa Sylheti Urdu
Other Asian languages	Indonesian Tagalog Tibetan
Languages other than Asian languages	French Portugese Spanish

II. Youth Focus Groups: Focus groups built upon responses from the Language Broker Scale with an emphasis given to the effect of language brokering on the psychosocial impact on youth and their families. After completing the survey, youth were offered the opportunity to expand upon their experiences and feelings in providing language assistance to adult family members. Youth were compensated \$10 for their participation in the focus group. In total, CACF conducted 8 focus groups with 54 participants.

III. Parent Interviews: The parent interviews inquired about the effect of using children as language brokers on family dynamics and barriers to accessing public services. Themes discussed in the in-depth interviews included:

- Frequency and situations where parents rely on their children to translate and interpret for them

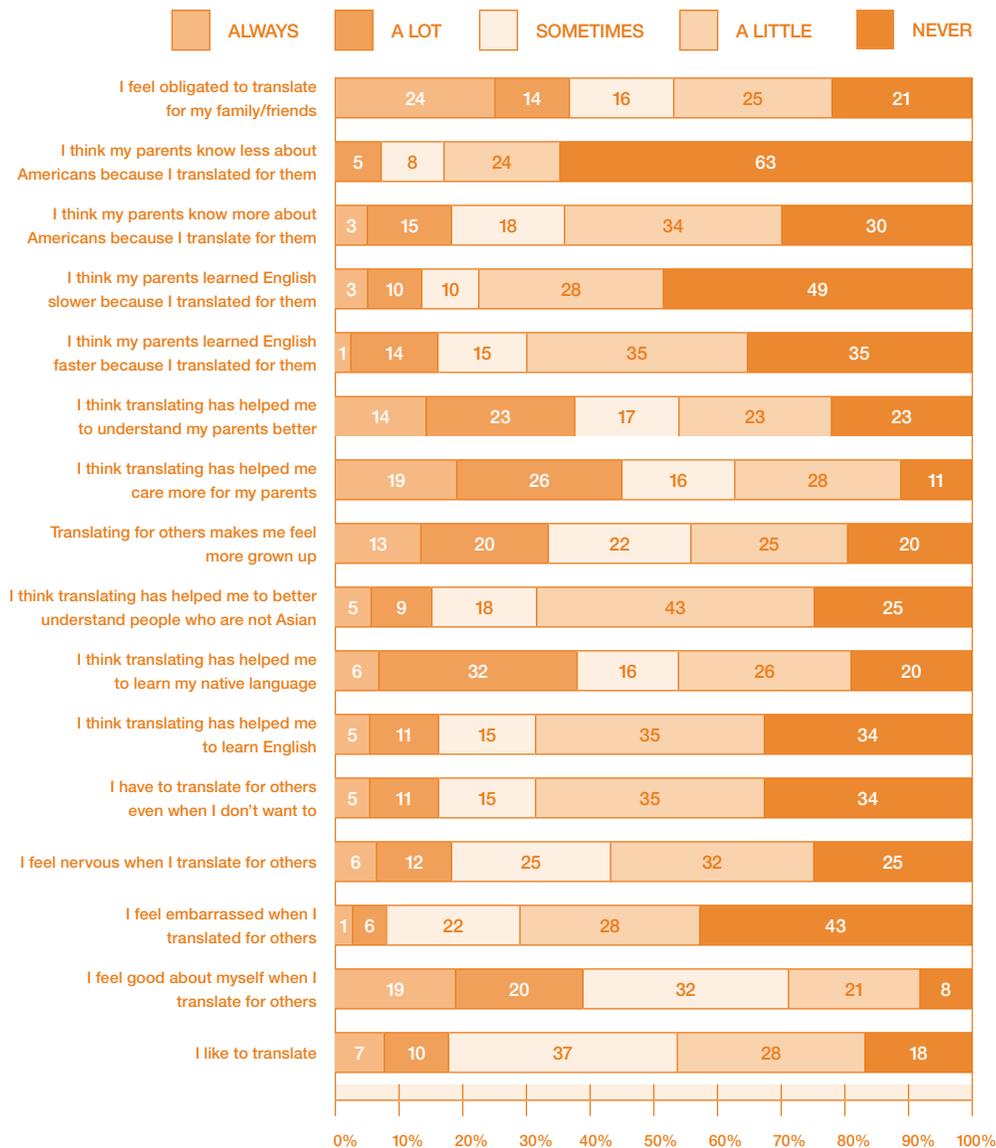
- Positive and negative impacts of language brokering
- Reasons why parents use children to interpret/translate in certain situations
- Parental perception of the effect of language brokering on family dynamics
- Impact of language brokering on parents

CACF conducted in-depth interviews with 6 parents to understand language brokering from the parental perspective. Four parents were Chinese; 2 parents were Korean. All parents self-identified as being limited English proficient. All interviews were conducted in the parent’s native language. Similar to the youth portion of the study, parents were recruited with the assistance of community based organizations. Parents were compensated \$20 for their participation in the study.

IV. Service Provider Interviews: CACF interviewed staff from Asian Pacific American led and serving community based organizations to understand language brokering from the perspective of service providers. Eight service providers were interviewed for the study.

APPENDIX B: ATTITUDES OF YOUTH TOWARD LANGUAGE BROKERING

CACF administered the Language Brokering Scale to 89 Asian Pacific American youth in New York City. To assess attitudes toward language brokering, youth were asked to rate 16 statements on how often they agreed with the attitude described in the statement. The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The following graph illustrates the responses to the 16 statements.



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DESIGN

Anthony Mendoza



COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, aims to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American children and families in New York City.

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