

CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING:

Spaces of belonging and mediators of cultural knowledge.

Final Report

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT:	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS/PROBLEM	5
2. METHODOLOGY	6
2.1 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT	6
2.1.1 THE SCHOOLS.....	6
2.1.2 OUR PARTICIPANT SAMPLE.....	8
2.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES	9
.....	10
2.2.1 OBSERVATIONS	10
2.2.2 SURVEY.....	13
2.2.3 VIGNETTE INTERVIEWS	13
2.2.4 ARTS-BASED METHODS	14
2.2.5 DRAWING WORKSHOP: (RUTLAND SCHOOL).....	14
2.2.6 DRAMA ROLE-PLAY: (RUTLAND SCHOOL)	15
2.2.7 SCULPTURE WORKSHOP: (MURRAY GREEN SCHOOL)	16
2.2.8 PODCAST WORKSHOP (RUTLAND SCHOOL AND MURRAY GREEN SCHOOL):.....	17
2.3 ANALYSIS.....	17
4. OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS	19
3.1 TO PROVIDE NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF HOW CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY IS MEDIATED THROUGH CHILDREN LANGUAGE BROKERING.....	19
3.2 TO GAIN A GOOD UNDERSTANDINGS OF WHAT CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERS FOCUS ON WHEN TRANSLATING IN PARTICULAR CONTEXTS AND WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE CONSCIOUS OF TRANSLATING CULTURES	20
3.3 TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF CHILD LANGUAGE BROKERING AS A VALUED AND RECOGNISED ACTIVITY THROUGH VISUAL OUTPUTS.....	21
IN SUMMARY	25
APPENDIX	26
REFERENCES	35

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Pia Jaime, sculpture workshop leader

Pia is a Freelance artist working as a Learning Support Assistant in the EAL department. Inspired by her own journey from Argentina to England and her own process of assimilating to a new culture, she designed sculpture workshops to reflect on identity and what learning a new language means. She worked with the young people to produce sculptures, using rubber gloves as plaster casts, which the students appropriated using images, words and carving techniques.

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Michael Vidon and the Educational Eastside Trust

Michael is a bilingual performance poet who encourages and shares his creativity in classrooms and the community. Michael was commissioned to work with us by Eastside Educational Trust, a charity that encourages creativity through arts workshops.

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1. Introduction

Child Language Brokering: What is it and why is it important as an area of research?

Child language brokers (CLBs) are children and young people from immigrant families who linguistically and culturally mediate on behalf of family members, peers and members of the local community who cannot speak the local language. The use of the term language brokering is significant because these young people often influence the nature and content of the message they convey (Tse, 1995) and find themselves as partial facilitators of cultural knowledge (Hall & Sham, 2007). For their families, they are often the bridge between the private world of the family and the public world of social spaces and officialdom. Some have described them as transcultural navigators, the 'right hand' of one's family (Orellana, 2009) and the storytellers of belonging (Malsbary, 2014).

Language broker's contributions to wider society should not be underestimated. Professional linguistic services in many settings in the UK are not only limited and sporadic but have been subject to increasing budget cuts and policy and political support. This is juxtaposed against rising anti-immigration discourses in circulation. Over the course of the current project, the young people in our study were living in an unstable socio-political climate through 'Brexit' and the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. Despite receiving very little attention in academic, public and policy debates, language brokering often occurs in very public contexts such as immigration offices, shops and banks (Guo, 2014). Such forces open up possibilities for studying child language brokering as 'cultural contact zones' (Hermans, 2001; O'Sullivan-Lago, de Abreu, & Burgess, 2008); the social spaces where cultures meet, are negotiated or perhaps, confrontational (Pratt, 1999). As well as looking at physical spaces of language brokering the study also accessed the 'imagined' spaces of identity belonging to explore the 'aboutness' of self (Zittoun, 2007), identity and belonging in language brokering. In particular, this project sought to explore how child language brokering acted as a cultural mediator for knowledge, such as beliefs, values, norms and institutional processes.

1.2. Aims and objectives of the project:

The aims and objectives of this project were:

- *To provide new understandings of how cultural knowledge and identity is mediated through children language brokering*
- *To gain a good understandings of what child language brokers focus on when translating in particular contexts and whether or not they are conscious of translating cultures*
- *To build the capacity of child language brokering as a valued and recognised activity through visual outputs*

1.3 Research Questions/Problem

How does child language brokering act as space of cultural mediation and identity belonging?

Sub-questions

1. What stories do young language brokers tell, through a variety of media, of the practices and contexts for mediating cultural knowledge?
2. How does language brokering act as a 'cultural contact zone' for identity and belonging?
3. How can a documentary film and online exhibition mediate and enhance awareness of child language brokering practices?

2. Methodology

To address the research questions above and provide evidence of culturally mediated language brokering practices, we utilised a variety of traditional social science methods in combination with arts-based methodologies. Our access to young people engaging in regular language brokering practices (aged between 13-16 years old) was made through 5 schools, some of whom took part in all the aspects of the data collection and others who, for a variety of reasons, took part in only elements of the project. We discuss in the following sections both the standard social science methods (surveying, observations and interviews) and arts-based methods (art, drama and film) used within this project.

2.1 The Research Context

The project initially began with five schools, two of which were in the borough of Hampshire (South of England) and three that were in Greater London. This report will primarily focus on the 3 London-based schools, as both the Hampshire schools withdrew from the study early-on, for extraneous reasons (time-pressure in one and our teacher-contact leaving in another). The three schools of focus were secondary level (covering ages 11-18 years) in the Greater London area. Going forward they will be referred to as Drake Academy,¹ Rutland School and Murray Green School.

Access to the schools was gained through a variety of strategies. Our contact with the Young Interpreter Scheme in Hampshire Borough Council placed an advert in their young interpreter newsletter asking if anyone would like to take part in our research and an EAL coordinator from one of the schools in London responded. The PI already had contact with the EAL teachers working in the final two London schools from a previous project, and they agreed to work with us again.

2.1.1 The schools

Whilst the three target schools were all based in Greater London, their make-up and socio-contextual locations were quite varied.

Murray Green School

Of all the schools, this is the oldest and situated in the most affluent area of Greater London. With over 1000 pupils, Murray Green is an all-girls faith school which was ranked as Outstanding in the last Ofsted review. Surrounded on all sides by large green spaces, the school is set in a residential area and a short walk away from a busy high road, adjacent to the main underground transport link for the area. Along the high road are coffee shops, restaurants and other boutique shops. These amenities are in line with the needs of the middle-class families who dominate the area. The highly gentrified residential area in which MG is located, comprises of large period homes and the school itself is comprised of an old large Victorian building.

¹ All names within this report, including the schools, pupils and teachers, are pseudonyms

However, many of the pupils attending the school live outside of the local area and travel quite a distance to attend, perhaps due to its faith based and single sex nature. As a result of these 2 factors, the school particularly appeals to families from Catholic and Muslim backgrounds (according the head of English as an Additional Language, EAL). It has also resulted in a highly diverse population stratified by social class and ethnic diversity. There is a particularly large population of Latin American pupils who are recently arrived transnational migrants via Spain and Portugal. As a result of the large migrant population at the school, the EAL head was involved in working closely with the new pupils, many of whom acted as language brokers for their family.

The EAL coordinator, Lucia, had a previous link with the PI (Sarah Crafter) having worked with her in a previous study ([Child language brokering in schools project](#)) and was keen to be involved in the current research. Lucia had begun the task of setting up a young interpreter club within the school. However, as she discussed, not all children were forthcoming in being part of it. In her fieldnotes SC² wrote the following:

'We started in the staff room where we had a cup of tea and discussed EAL coordinators difficulties with setting up a young interpreter scheme. Lucia had struggled to recruit students who had interpreting experience at home but were not willing to make themselves public. In previous years young people who wanted to do some kind of interpreting role professionally came forward. This year this had not really happened. Equally, some YP (young people) had come forward but admitted that their parents had not wanted them to do it' (Fieldnotes: SC, 2015)

Thus, in return for the time and access generously given by the school to be part of the study, the research team helped to help build a young interpreters club.

We would later work closely with one of the Teaching Assistants within the school, Pia, who worked as a freelance artist outside of her teaching commitments. She was in attendance at one of our meetings with the newly started young interpreters club and asked to be involved in the project.

Rutland School

Located in a large highly residential suburb of Greater London, the area has been traditionally very working class, and continues to be so. Although in the past White British, during the 2000s there was a large influx of migrants from Africa, as well as Eastern Europe; reflected in the school populace. At the time of data collection, the school was in a state of change with a major refurbishment and expansion going on. The 2016 Ofsted report for this school was 'requires improvement'. The school is a large comprehensive and as a result of diverse population it has a well-managed and large EAL department.

Our contacts at the school were the EAL head (Catherine) and a teaching assistant (Nicolae) who were very committed to working with children who acted as young interpreters. At the time of our research Nicolae, himself a former professional interpreter, had just started a young interpreters club. During the course of the project, we visited the club numerous times. It was held during lunch hours in an EAL classroom and was well

² SC refers to the first author, Sarah Crafter and HI refers to the second author, Humera Iqbal

attended. Some of the students told us it acted as a safe space for them. On a visit to the school, HI recorded:

'Most of the children were year 10-11 and they were very confident and many had lived in more than one country before England and spoke more than one language. The children also tended to sit according to language too. There was an Italian speaking table (very mixed- a lot of Italian Bangladeshis and an Italian Nigerian), a Polish table (more homogenous- there was one girl whose first day it was and another 2 who had started 6 months ago) and a Romanian speaking table, also a Lithuanian speaker here. There was also a table of mixed language speakers.' (Fieldnotes: HI, 2015)

Drake Academy

Located in a highly dense and populated Greater London neighbourhood, this school was one of a number of large secondary schools in the area. Historically, the area had been home to many industries and this is reflected in the local geography with some abandoned chimneys and former factories remaining. Since the 60s the area has undergone a change from White working class, to multicultural suburb, with commonwealth migration, asylum seekers and migrants from the EU. The area still has one of the highest levels of unemployment in Britain, and higher than average crime levels. Recently a redevelopment programme in the area has meant changes in infrastructure with new housing and new transport links and redevelopment of commercial areas underway. The population of the area is reflected in the makeup of the school. As HI records in her fieldnotes:

'As we walked up to the school, I noticed a large housing estate which must be home to some of the pupils at Drake. The school itself had a very clinical feel. It was large and spaced over a large stretch of land.' (Fieldnotes: HI, 2015)

Drake academy had an Ofsted report of 'needs improvement' at the time the data was collected. In relation to EAL, the school website has a small section which details the process of four-week induction of students who have recently arrived in the UK. Of the three London schools, the EAL department of this school was understaffed in relation to the school numbers. There was a large demand placed on it, and the EAL head (Lauren) discussed this with us.

'Lauren began discussing the composition of the school and described it as being made up of Bulgarians (who she said often had poor literacy levels and were Turkish speaking), Portuguese, Polish, Spanish, Somali and Romanian as well as Africans via Europe (twice migrants). There was thus a wide range of languages spoken at the school and Lauren said that the new pupils arrived with a range of English as well as reading/writing skills from none to basic levels.' (Fieldnotes: HI, 2015)

2.1.2 Our participant sample

We used a survey (further details below) in order to find young people who were acting as regular language brokers for family members. Respondents who brokering once a week or more were invited to take part in the interviews and arts-based methods. Our classroom observations largely sought to build rapport with the young people and help us get to know

about the school context. Our primary source of data collection were semi-structured vignette interviews. Twenty-eight young people took part in the interviews (23 female, 5 male). Our smaller proportion of male participants may be partly attributed to Murray Green being a single-sex girls' school.

Two of our respondents were born in the UK. One had almost immediately returned to Hong Kong with her family and then later returned to England although it was not clear what age she was when she returned. The other was born in the UK and her parents had arrived from Albania two years previous to that. The majority of our sample arrived between the ages of 11 years and 14 years old.

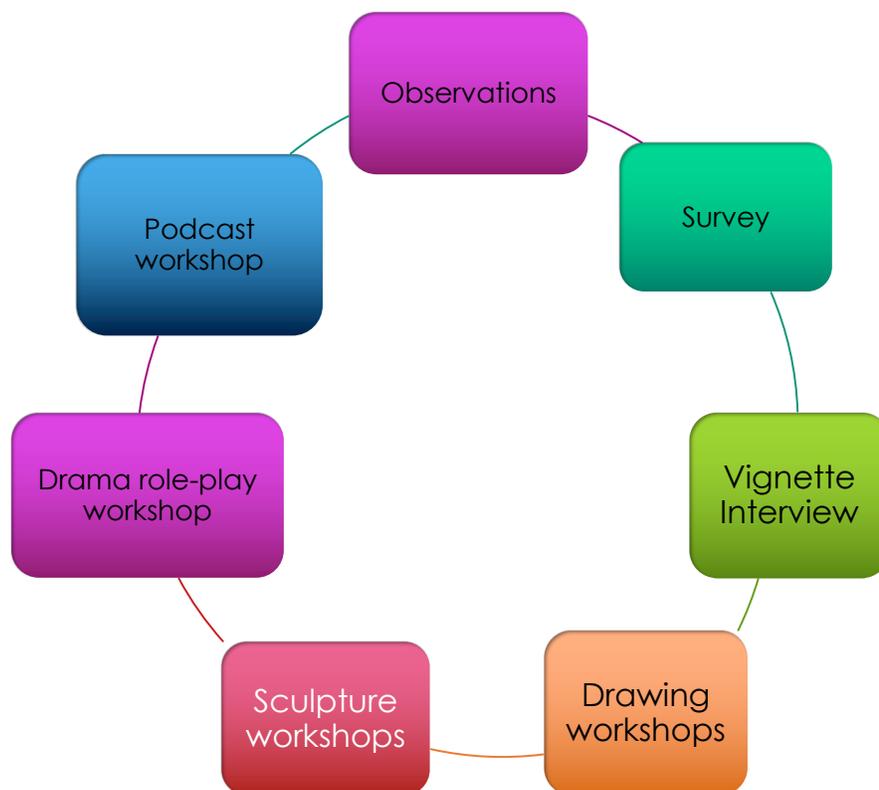
The young people who took part came from a range of backgrounds and some had experienced complex transnational journey's through countries that were different from their family's origin. There were some direct journeys from countries like Poland, Bulgaria, Colombia and Ecuador, straight to the UK. A group of young people, whose family origins were in the South Asia's, had come via Italy. Some of our Latin American sample had come to the UK via Spain.

In addition to taking part in our vignette interviews, some of our sample also engaged in our drawing, drama role-play, sculpture and a podcast workshop. Rutland also extended the invitation to take part in some of these workshops to other pupils in their Young Interpreter club so we ended up with additional participants who had not previously been interviewed. More details about the participants and a full breakdown of which activities the young people took part in, can be found in the Appendix 3.

2.2 Methodological approaches

We used a variety of research methods which were geared towards building relationships with the participants, collecting in-depth information about the phenomenon, and accessing information which might be difficult to articulate through standard social science approaches. Figure 1 presents an overview of the methods used within the project. However not all the schools/young people took part in all of these different aspects.

Fig. 1 Methodological approaches adopted within the study



2.2.1 Observations

Our access to the pupils for the observations and rapport building varied depending on the EAL contact in the school. All three schools were seeking to set up newly formed clubs and enlisted our help to do so. However, Lauren, EAL coordinator from Drake Academy, undertook introductions via her Year 8 form group. As a consequence, a number of the pupils in this class did not have language brokering experience needed to take part in the project. It is for this reason we decided to, in addition to introductory workshops, survey pupils to try and gain a better understanding of the brokering practices.

Introductory Workshops

In all three schools we began with a series of introductory workshops. The purpose of the workshops was for the children to familiarize themselves with us, and for us with them. The content of the workshops was a combination of self-developed material as well as material from the [Hampshire Young Interpreter training pack](#).

The **first workshop** we conducted was around 'starting a new school'. This was an experience which can be particularly challenging for young translators who when they first arrive to a new country do not speak the language. The workshop schedule is shown below.

paper and pens to help them do this. We showed them examples from other schools:

Our **third workshop** was also around translating and titled 'The Who, What and Where of Translating!'. This activity was designed as a small group discussion. The instructions given to the young people was as follows:

⚡ We have prepared some cards with places **WHERE** you may translate for family members, friends and other people too.

⚡ Each person will pick a card and show the picture on it to the group.

⚡ Thinking about the place on the card we would like you to:

⚡ Tell us about a situation when you had to translate in this place -

- What happened?
- **WHO** were you translating for?
- **WHAT** were you translating?

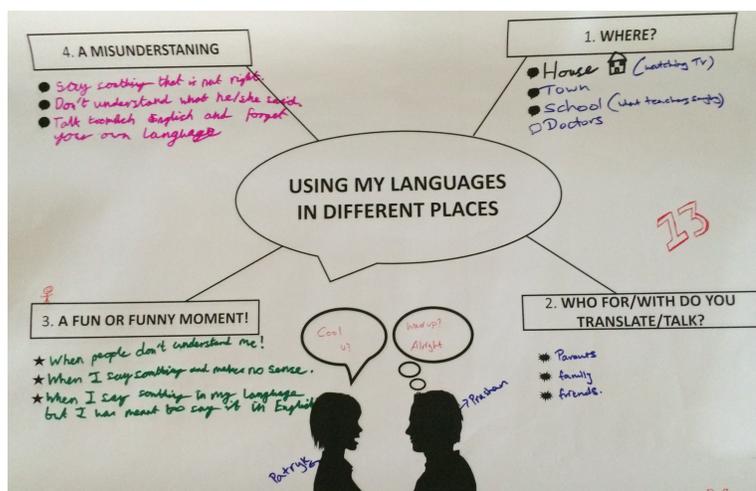
⚡ Then ask other group members to share their experiences and tell the group about what happened.

We developed flash cards using images of places and people and asked the young people to discuss a story relating to the card they had picked and their experiences of translation. For example, at the bank or doctors:



We selected the 'who, what and where's' based on past research conducted on child language brokers.

Our **final workshop** was used as a final 'get to know me' workshop. We asked pupils to fill-in a chart about 'where' they had brokered, who with, whether there had been any funny moments or any misunderstandings. Pupils first completed a small version of the chart, and then in a larger group



filled in the bigger chart. The researchers facilitated a group discussion as the larger chart was being filled.

2.2.2 Survey

The main purpose of the survey was to find pupils within the school who regularly undertook language brokering activities for family members. The survey contained a selection of questions from the CLBIS Survey (Child Language Brokering in Schools survey) that had been developed for a previous project (see <http://child-language-brokering.weebly.com/>). Beyond basic biographical data, questions asked pupils how well they could either understand and speak their languages with three possible categories of 'fluently, 'fairly well' or 'a little'. The main languages of family members, who respondents translated for and how often, the places where translation has taken place and the kinds of translating and interpreting, they had engaged in (see Appendix 1).

2.2.3 Vignette interviews

The vignette interview is the primary data collection technique which foregrounds our project. Vignettes are short stories or scenarios about a fictional character experiencing a phenomenon in context (Crafter et al. 2015). Four vignettes were all adapted from real experiences of language brokers found in the literature. All four vignettes involve some kind of difficult situation which the language broker must negotiate or manage through their language brokering. In two of the scenarios the character is attempting to language broker different forms of cultural knowledge (see Table 1).

Table 1. Vignette's aimed at explaining different cultural knowledge

Gabiella's Vignette	Amrit's Vignette
<p>Gabriela and her father are at the council meeting with the housing officer. They have asked many times for problems with the heating to be fixed but nothing has been done. The housing officer explains in an annoyed voice that the job has already been booked in. Gabriela's father doesn't understand why someone can't fix it that day. He gets angry and asks her to say he will not leave the office until something is done. He tells Gabriela to call the housing officer a useless idiot</p>	<p>Amrit and his mother are at the supermarket buying groceries for a special meal- momo dumplings for his grandfather's birthday. Amrit and his mother have been walking up and down the supermarket looking for a particular ghee (clarified butter) that is very important for frying the momo dumplings which they just can't find. Amrit's mother asks Amrit to ask a staff member for the ingredient but Amrit doesn't know what the right word is in English. He approaches the staff member and begins to describe the ingredient. The staff member answers in an impatient tone of voice. Amrit's mother asks what is being said</p>

The respondents were also asked to discuss two vignettes whereby the character in the story was attempting to language broker different cultural norms or values between the two adults in the situation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Vignettes aimed at explaining different norms and values

Jin's Vignette	Sorraya's Vignette
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Jin wants to invite his English friend to play at his house and have dinner. He gets his mum to talk to his friend's mum in the playground and Jin translates. His mother tells Jin to say that she plans to cook their usual family food, which is Chinese. Jin knows that most of his friends eat burgers and chips when they go around other people's houses. His mother looks hurt and slightly cross and tells Jin to say to her friend's mother that it is polite to eat what you are given when you are a guest and she should try some different food

Sorraya is translating for her neighbour at the doctors. The woman's little son is not eating and this is the second visit in four months. After a little discussion the doctor says that the mother has to stop giving him so many sweets. The mother cheerfully asks Sorraya to tell the doctor that when he starts screaming she gives him a smack. Sorraya knows that the doctor will not approve of hitting her child

Each vignette was read to the participant and then they were asked the following questions:

1. **What do you think is happening in this situation?**
2. **How would you describe the cultural misunderstanding that has occurred?**
3. **How do you think the child in the story would deal with it?**
4. **Role play- Imagine you are in this situation. I am the housing officer and you are Gabriela. Interviewer says an impatient tone- 'The job has already been booked in, you will have to wait'. What would you do/say?**

2.2.4 Arts-based methods

Following the vignette interviews a series of different arts-based workshops were arranged for our respondents. The two schools which took up our arts-based activities were Rutland School and Murray Green School, both in London. Quite a number of our vignette interviewees took part in the workshops, which occurred between 4-6 months after the interviews. However, it was not unusual for other pupils to turn up on the day because the EAL teachers had invited or encouraged them. We did not wish to exclude anyone for ethical reasons, therefore no one was turned away. However, all the additional pupils belonged to the school's Young Translator clubs, though they may not all have been child language brokers (see Appendix 3 for breakdown of participants by activity).

The aim of the arts-based approaches was to stimulate discussions about language brokering and migration beyond the use of standard social science methods.

2.2.5 Drawing workshop: (Rutland School)

A drawing workshop was facilitated by a cultural psychologist, Evangelia, in Rutland School with a small group of young people. Evangelia was originally from Greece, where she worked as a therapist but since coming to the UK she had undertaken her Masters and a Doctorate in psychology before working in academia. Evangelia used the Synallactic Collective Image Technique (S.C.I.T) in her workshop, which was developed in Greece by Vassilou and Vassilou (1983) specifically to encourage intrapersonal and interpersonal group interactions. She had previously used this drawing technique for both therapy and research purposes. The workshop took place in the school on a Saturday morning and 10 young people who were aged between 13-16 years old attended. Some of them had taken part in the vignette interview. Others responded to a general invitation from the

English as an Additional Language coordinator. Most of the young people in the group had undertaken transnational journey's before arriving in the UK and spoke at least two other languages in addition to English.

Each pupil was given a sheet of white paper and coloured pens. They were given the following instruction:

"Think about a specific occasion where they translated about someone else in a specific setting (school, GP surgery, bank, market etc) and try to identify within yourself how you feel. When you feel ready, choose whatever colours you want and try to express this feeling on the paper with a drawing that will depict this occasion"

They were encouraged to draw all the people involved, the setting, themselves, and some kind of action. Following this, on a separate piece of paper, they were asked to:

- Describe what you see in the drawing (so each will tell his/her own story). Please, write down a concrete recollection.
- Write down how you were feeling when you had this experience.
- Write how you are feeling now.
- Write down the title you give to the drawing

The individual drawings were then brought together as a connected or collective story in an order decided jointly by the group. The pupils are asked to vote which drawing should begin their collective story. The voted drawing was placed in a position where everyone could see it. The person who was voted starts a story describing the heroine or hero and giving the story a name. Each drawing represents a 'chapter' in the story which the pupils tell in turn. The last pupil writes the final chapter. This is followed by a facilitated group discussion whereby a group theme is established, highlighting how their personal stories are similar and different and how a personal story can be a collective story for young people sharing the same experience. Fig. 2 shows how the final drawings were placed in an order.

Fig. 2 The collective story of brokering experiences



2.2.6 Drama role-play: (Rutland School)

The drama role-play workshop took place in Rutland School in the afternoon after the drawing workshop delivered by Evangelia. The workshop was facilitated by the research team. Following some brief warm-up games and exercises the students were asked to engage in some drama role-play using on the [Play-building](#) approach. Each student is asked to create a short performance based on a small amount of information about an issue or event. They are instructed that the play should last between 8-12 minutes. The role of the workshop leader is as facilitator only so that there is minimal direction.

The 'issue/events' provided to the students were shorted versions of the ones used in the vignette interviews (see Appendix 2). We were interested in exploring the differences and synergies across the two methodologies. Each member of the group were asked to either play the role of the young translator, the non-English speaking person who needed their words translating (e.g. a parent) or the English-only speaking adult. They were also asked to incorporate into their drama something uncomfortable said by one of the adults.

After splitting into groups and familiarizing themselves with the characters, the students were asked to undertake a 'Brainstorming' phase. They were instructed to discuss whether they had similar experiences in the story, to explore what they think the characters would say, feel and behave. The next phase involved working on the scene by working out what they were going to say and to begin physically acting that out. Following a rehearsal period, each group then performed their piece for the rest of the class. These performances were video recorded.

All the young people who took part in the drawing workshop joined the drama role-play. They were also joined by 5 other pupils but we did not collect data on these students.

2.2.7 Sculpture workshop: (Murray Green School)

Another arts-based workshop took place in Murray Green School and was delivered by a bilingual freelance artist, Pia, who was also a teaching assistant in the school. She was of Argentinian origin and specialised in identity-based art. The artist's own identity and sense of belonging factored strongly into the task that she developed given the brief.

Her workshop was based around using the concept of Ex-Votos. The origins of the term Ex-voto comes from Latin and means 'for solemn vow or promise' and refers to a devotional offering made to a saint or divinity without the intention of recovery or use. These offerings are deposited in places of worship such as churches often around religious shrines. They take multiple forms including texts, paintings and symbols including the modelled replica of a healed body part.

Pia built on this concept and developed a set of workshops for the young interpreters to create a plaster hand which would be painted and engraved with symbols and imagery related to their identity as a language broker. The artist discussed how the young people would be able to combine in multiple ways: written words (which would allow for expressions of language), objects (to express their cultures and personalities) and images (to incorporate description and information). The hand represented the idea of being able to help others (through translation), but also reflected their need to be helped. Pia sought

to develop an object which would be a symbolic portrait of the workshop participants. Pia had also taken into account the faith-based nature of the school in developing this task.

The workshop was designed to take place over 5 sessions across 10 weeks. Initially these sessions were intended to each stretch over 2 hours each. However, the school context made timetabling a challenge. Therefore, the young people had 5 main sessions during school hours and were able to complete their hands in their own time often with the help of Pia. The workshops took place in the art rooms of the school.

The group was made up of 9 girls aged between 13-15 years (see the table in Appendix 3). All of the participants acted as a child language broker for family regularly, though some were more active than others. Most of the girls had taken part in one-to-one interviews prior to being part of the workshops. Others had been selected by Lucia and Pia to take part in the workshop because they were struggling to be part of the school community in various ways.

2.2.8 Podcast workshop (Rutland School and Murray Green School):

The Radio podcast workshop took place at University College London in the Bloomsbury Theatre. The workshop was led by Eastside Educational Trust (<http://www.eastside.org.uk/>) who are leading youth arts provider that aims to help young people develop their creative thinking. The workshop facilitator was bilingual poet, Michael Vidon.

After a series of group warm-up exercises the young people were split into groups and shown examples of podcasts. The group discussed the key characteristic of a good podcast. The groups were then asked to think about developing their own podcasts about the translating and interpreting. Each group were given themes to explore in relation to their podcasts. They were asked to write three words related to their themes:

Family relationships
Moving into new
Age and responsibility
Personal space and Boundaries

Each young person was then asked to draw their own timelines, adding in places where they lived, significant people in their lives, significant memories or situations that happened to them. Having created their timeline, they were then asked to pick out a memory specifically related to their theme. They were asked to produce some free-writing based on their memory (using the five senses: hear, taste, smell, see, touch). From there, each group decided on what they would talk about in their podcast and went to different rooms to do their recording.

2.3 Analysis

The qualitative vignette interviews were analysed borrowing from a thematic approach (Flick, 2006) that utilises the research questions and theoretical approach as its basis. Procedurally, this was following by steps for analysing multivoicedness (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Therefore, an iterative process of forming codified segments of text was the

first step of the process. This was followed by further analysis looking at the different dialogical positionings taken between the child and the character. The arts-based methods were treated as a secondary level of analysis which was supplementary to the vignette interviews. The interpretive process focused on the ways the outputs were produced, giving attention to the talk in context that visible the production process (Lomax, 2012)

4. Overview of analysis

There were four overarching themes that emerged from the vignette interviews: (i) positionalities, (ii) communication strategies and skills, (iii) 'Translating and me', and (iv) cultural knowledge, resources and sensitivities. In this report, we outline how the data speaks to the aims and objectives of the project. These were:

- *To provide new understandings of how cultural knowledge and identity is mediated through children language brokering*
- *To gain a good understandings of what child language brokers focus on when translating in particular contexts and whether or not they are conscious of translating cultures*
- *To build the capacity of child language brokering as a valued and recognised activity through visual outputs*

3.1 To provide new understandings of how cultural knowledge and identity is mediated through children language brokering

(i) Communication strategies and skills

Discussions about communication strategies and language skills and competencies are not unusual in interviews with child language brokers (Crafter, Cline & Prokopiou, 2017). The young people reflected on their own concerns about their 'language competency' and whether they were 'getting things right'. These were also the concerns they projected onto the vignette character. In addition, they discussed what we have termed 'situational competence', such as using technology to look up words during language brokering situations or turning to body language and gesture to fill-in gaps in understanding. Our young people also demonstrated how adept they were at capitalizing on their cultural knowledge about 'societal norms and etiquette' or ways on behaving in public. In one example, one of our respondents who was still learning English asked for milk in a supermarket in a very direct way ["do you know where the milk is?"]. This was interpreted by the shop person as being rude and she was told off. Following this, she adapted her mode of talking in ways that were a closer fit to modes of communication in the UK

(ii) Translating and me

For our sample, language brokering formed a regular and integrated part of their everyday lives. It was not surprising then, that their interviews included a range of descriptions about the 'who, what, where' of everyday translating. These stories did not just include descriptions of situations and contexts where brokering took place, with whom, and about what. It also included stories that described the journey towards becoming a translator following migration to the UK. Language brokering was described as a 'normal' practice which we titled 'translating as every day, every day as translating'. Many of those we interviewed made links between 'pre and-post migration expectations' and talked about the characters expectations for what life in London would be like. Our language brokers were made very conscious of differences in how institutions dealt with, say, housing and welfare needs.

(iii) Cultural knowledge, resources and sensitivities

Our vignette characters were placed in a range of different settings and contexts, such as the doctors, the school playground, a supermarket and a housing office. It is not surprising then, that our respondents also drew on knowledge about cultures in a variety of different ways. There were discussions about the role of food in culture, different cultural representations about smacking, stories about friendships and visiting other people's houses. Arguably, the act of language brokering had provided many of our sample with a rich understanding of both the similarities and differences between their home culture and host cultures. In some situations, they told us they would use this knowledge to alter the meaning or content of conversations.

3.2 To gain a good understandings of what child language brokers focus on when translating in particular contexts and whether or not they are conscious of translating cultures

(i) Positionalities

This theme reflects instances where the young people sampled discussed how they, and significant others in their lives, are positioned in relation to the practice of language brokering. For example, some of the young people talked about 'language brokering as a family practice', which involved instances where the young person and their parents are described as coming together in partnership or engaging in joint family care work through language brokering. In some instances, it was reported that this could potentially alter the dynamics of the parent-child relationship, wherein the child would take a very 'adult-like' approach to the brokering situation.

Our sample discussed a variety of different ways of 'positioning the parent' in the vignette story, and in relation to their own experience. On the one hand, the parent was positioned as being competent and responsible because it was understood they wanted the best for the family and were therefore willing to get into difficult conversations to achieve this goal. In this instance, there was a distinction made between a parent lacking in competency and a parent who could not speak the local language. There were also instances when the parent in either the vignette, or in real life, were positioned as 'embarrassing', 'emotional' or 'incompetent'. For example, at times, parents pushed the child to complain or discuss difficult issues to a greater extent than the young people felt comfortable doing. They might also wish to disagree with a parent in some situations but felt wrong or 'ashamed' of arguing about an issue in front of a stranger.

The other key stakeholder discussed by the young people was the 'positioning of the institutional/professional other'. By necessity, language brokering often involves a three-way conversation between the child, their parent and a professional/manager/practitioner adult. There were numerous incidences where young people described adults as being supportive or kind during their language brokering. Some adults went out of their way to enable the communication to be easier. However, one of the vignette stories involved an adult character being 'difficult and rude' to the child language broker. This facilitated a number of examples from the young people where they

were spoken to in a rude way. In relation to the vignette characters, this rudeness was sometimes attributed to racism.

Finally, the other positionality of relevance was the 'positioning of the self and the vignette character'. The young people smoothly transitioned between talking about the character and talking about their own experiences. These transitions could be hard to disentangle but fell into some broad themes or patterns. The first was about age, and how the child status of the language broker made them either invisible or powerless. Particularly when advocating for parents, children were conscious that their status put them at a disadvantage. On the other hand, there were instances when they thought the adult involved would be impressed by the ways language brokers help their families. 'Affect' or emotion, played a significant role in the young people's discussions about the vignette character and their own experiences. They described feeling 'proud', 'embarrassed', 'ashamed', 'sympathetic' [for the parent], 'awkward'. They felt that some situations involved 'anger' but that the role of the broker was to 'stay calm'. Some described humorous situations, where telephone calls had gone wrong and they had laughed about it with parents. Equally, some described a 'weight of responsibility' that reflected being in the middle of adult conversations. There was a small minority whose talk involved a 'fear' of others outside of their own community.

In order to manage conflictual or difficult situations the respondents applied translating positions to the characters in the vignette, or to themselves in real situations. One strategy would be 'conflict avoidance'. This could involve withdrawing themselves and their parent entirely from the situation. If the parent was using heated language, conflict would be avoided by tempering the content of the discussion through translation. Some brokers talked about positioning themselves as a 'neutral or passive broker' which is something akin to a professional translator. In this regard, they saw themselves purely as the mouthpiece for their parent and was a mechanism for emotionally distancing themselves from the content of the conversation. There were times and situations where they became an 'active broker', wherein they rephrased conversations, made judgement calls about changes to content and meaning, assisted in regulating the emotions of those involved and using their own cultural knowledge to navigate some of the perils or pitfalls of difficult conversations.

How they moved through these positions depended on the context, the situation under discussion and who was involved.

3.3 To build the capacity of child language brokering as a valued and recognised activity through visual outputs

Our respondents engaged in a range of arts-based activities which subsequently led to activities to raise the visibility of child language brokering. Our ability to undertake an extended programme of arts-based activities was supported by a combination of the AHRC Translating Cultures grant fund and the UCL Beacon Bursary for Public Engagement fund. These funds enabled us to undertake the sculpture workshop, the drama role-play workshop, the radio podcast workshop and a drawing workshop.

The artifacts developed by the young people who took part in these workshops were displayed in three Exhibitions. Two of the exhibitions took place in Rutland School and

Murray Green School, which is where the workshops had taken place. The exhibitions were attended by school pupils, parents and the school Senior Leadership Team. In one school, the local Mayor came to see the exhibition. In the other school, the exhibition was attended by a local English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher network.



Fig. 3 Two pupils attending the exhibition at Murray Green School

When embarking on our study, we had not fully appreciated the efforts that it took for EAL teachers and coordinators to have their EAL work understood and recognised within the school. They sometimes felt that both they, and their pupils, were undervalued. Therefore, attendance of the exhibition by the Head Teacher, other members of the Senior Leadership Team and class teachers were of significant importance. One teacher wrote to us:

"Thank you so much for everything. I am not sure how will you measure the success of it, but for the feedback I am having in the corridors, it was great! Some teachers are even talking about the need to open up a space for a more active dialogue and exchange. I was impressed also but all the work I haven't seen, I can't wait to hear the radio show or see more illustrations, they were so revealing. You must feel terribly proud. Thank you so much for letting me be a part of it."

Another teacher wrote:

"Today I got a buzz because I felt so good about the exhibition. It was a great end of a very demanding year. Thank you for organising all this and for all of your hard work to make this happen."

Attendees of the school exhibition were also given the opportunity to write their comments about the exhibition on a large white cloth. Below are some of the comments made by exhibition attendees (staff, pupils and parents):

"I loved learning about your translators and watching the film" (Pupil)

"Fantastic work! Very impressive! You should all be proud" (EAL coordinator)

"I've loved looking at the different hands. I didn't realise the range of language spoken at Murray Green School, and the amount of people that are young translators for families and friends" (pupil)

"This exhibition is inspirational and shows how important languages are to communication" (pupil)

"I had a fun experience when I joined this workshop. I learned that you have to be yourself in front of everyone" [pupil; her mother visited the exhibition and wrote] "I enjoyed being in this exhibition and I am a happy and proud mother" (mother)

In addition to the exhibitions in the schools, the team were awarded a slot at the Bloomsbury Arts Festival (22nd October 2016) titled 'Many voices, many languages: Being a young translator.' This festival is open to the general public and hosts a range of arts-related activities across a five-day period. The day of our exhibition we saw over 400 people attend



Fig 4 Photographs taken of the Bloomsbury Arts Festival exhibition

All three exhibitions displayed a combination of the following outputs and artifacts. They are:

A comic book illustrated the young people's drawings

Following from the drawing workshop the children's artwork was illustrated by Kremina Dimitrova into a comic-book. This was displayed at the exhibitions and has now become available to the public:

https://issuu.com/sarahcrafter/docs/the_story_of_being_a_language_broke

A short-animated film using the recordings from the radio podcast day

The Radio Podcast workshop led to the development of a short animation film, developed by the filmmaker Alan Fentiman, using the recorded voices of our child language brokers.

<https://youtu.be/OvljhyuM4Us>

A short film aimed at professionals

In addition, a short film aimed at professionals working with language brokers has been developed in collaboration with filmmaker Alan Fentiman.

Events aimed at practitioners, young people and the general public

Since the project has finished, we have used the film to present at a variety of events and workshops attended by people interested in this topic:

Workshop with young people: 'Being a young interpreter. Migration Museum Project, London, UK. (11.07.17). Delivered as part of ESRC Knowledge Exchange Dialogues Scheme led by Erel, U., Mohan, G., & Keith, M. (2017). 'Understanding and Communicating Migration Issues through Arts. With this blog: <http://www.migrationmuseum.org/being-a-young-interpreter/>

Workshop with practitioners: 'Multilingual children and language brokering.' The importance of the Native Language – Practitioner Day: ESRC Festival of Social Science (10th November 2017). Delivered with Kim Armstrong from the charity Mothertongue. Birkbeck College, London.

Presentation: Iqbal, H & Crafter S. (2017). Language Brokers not Stock Brokers: Young People as Traders of Culture. UCL Lunch Hour Lecture. Thursday 30th November. (attended by 70 people – academics and general public)

Presentation: Iqbal, H., & Crafter, S. (2018) Young translators as mediators of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Presentation for the Chartered Institute of Linguists at their Annual General Meeting (23rd June, London).

Presentation: Iqbal, H., & Crafter, S. (2018) The Secret World of Young Translators. Pint of Science Festival (16th May)

In Summary

Given that we live in an era of global migration, the practice of child language brokering is not something that is likely to wane. This study took place against a sustained level of social and economic austerity, with cuts to professional linguistic services. Young people fill the gap where state intervention fails. It is important therefore, in our view, that there is increased understanding about use of language brokers in professional settings and further support for children, families and stakeholders who interact with them.

We suggest that a great deal more research work is still needed with parents, across a range of different settings (particularly frontline and emergency settings), in comparative international studies and historical contexts.

Appendix

Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire

Languages & Interpreting

This survey is to help us learn more about the languages you speak and any interpreting you may do for family or friends. It only takes **10 minutes** to complete.

We would really like for you to take part, but it's not compulsory. We won't share your details and will only use the results for our research project.

If you do join in, please do so with the understanding:

1. Your information will be treated in a confidential way and will only used for the research.
2. We will keep the information in a secure password protected place.
3. If you do not want to take part in the study at any time, you can leave. Just let us know.
4. If you fill out the survey, it means you agree to take part in the research.



Name: _____ Name of School: _____

1. Year in School _____ Date of Birth: _____ Gender: Boy Girl

2. Place you were born:

3. If born outside of this country, age of arrival to the U.K.:

4. Number of brothers and their ages:

5. Number of sisters and their ages:

6. What languages do you speak and understand in addition to English? (Please write down language and **tick all** the boxes that apply)

Language 1: _____

	fluently	fairly well	a little
understand			
speak			

Language 2: _____

	fluently	fairly well	a little
understand			
speak			

Language 3: _____

	fluently	fairly well	a little
understand			
speak			

Are there any other languages you speak and understand in addition to English and the ones you have told us about above? (If yes, please write them below)

7. What is your mother's main language? _____

8. What is your father's main language? _____

9. Have you ever translated from one language to another for other people (e.g. family, friends)?

(tick one)?: YES NO NOT SURE

10. At what age did you begin translating? Age _____

11. Are you still translating? YES NO

12. If no, how many years ago did you stop? _____

13. Do your brothers and sisters interpret? YES NO

IF YES- Which one(s) (include their current ages)?

14. Who have you translated for and how often do you translate for them? (Tick all that apply)

	Every day	Once a week	Just sometimes	Never
Your mother				

Your father				
A grandparent				
Younger brothers or sisters				
Other family				
Teachers				
Friends				
Other people				

If you translate for Other people, please tell us who they are?

15. Where have you translated? Please **TICK** ALL the places that apply to you.

At home At school doctor's office dentist's office,
 shops restaurants on the street parent-teacher conferences
 other places: _____

16. What kinds of things have you translated? Please **TICK** ALL the things that apply to you.

Letters homework report cards other school information
 the mail bills bank statements legal documents
 phone calls conversation television show movies
 radio shows newspaper words other stuff: _____

Appendix 2. Drama Role-play instructions

Story 1: Gabriela and her father at the housing office

Characters:

- (1) Gabriela (the young interpreter) [YOU CAN CHANGE THE NAME OF THE INTERPRETER]
- (2) Gabriela's father (who doesn't speak English)
- (3) A housing officer

Setting:

The housing office at the local council

The Storyline:

Gabriela and her father are the council meeting with the housing officer

There is a problem with their house which needs fixing

Gabriela's father is angry because the job isn't getting done.

Now it's your turn to:

- Have you had any similar experiences to the one mentioned in the story (if so, what happened, what was said, how did they react/feel)? Could you use that experience to create your 'scene'?
- If you haven't had this experience imagine what it would be like and how you think the scene would play out (What would they say to each other, what would the adults say, how would all the characters feel? How would the characters behave? What would you do if this happened to you?)

Be as creative as you want, and it's up to you to take the story in whichever direction you like!

Story 2: Amrit and Grandpa's Birthday Meal

Characters:

- (1) Amrit (the young interpreter) [YOU CAN CHANGE THE NAME OF THE INTERPRETER]
- (2) Amrit's mother (who doesn't speak English)
- (3) The supermarket staff member

Setting:

The local supermarket

The Storyline:

Amrit and his mother are at the supermarket buying groceries

They can't find a particular ingredient and Amrit doesn't know the name in English

Amrit asks a member of staff but they get annoyed with him

Now it's your turn to:

- Have you had any similar experiences to the one mentioned in the story (if so, what happened, what was said, how did they react/feel)? Could you use that experience to create your 'scene'?
- If you haven't had this experience imagine what it would be like and how you think the scene would play out (What would they say to each other, what would the adults say, how would all the characters feel? How would the characters behave? What would you do if this happened to you?)

Be as creative as you want, and it's up to you to take the story in whichever direction you like!

Story 3: Jin tries to invite a friend around for dinner

Characters:

- (1) Jin (the young interpreter) [YOU CAN CHANGE THE NAME OF THE INTERPRETER]
- (2) Jin's mother (who doesn't speak English)
- (3) The friend's mother [PLEASE MAKE UP A NAME FOR THE MUM]

Setting:

The school playground

The Storyline:

Jin would like to invite his friend around for dinner

Jin's mum plans to cook their traditional home food

His friend's mum says he is a fussy eater and won't eat this kind of food

Jin's mum doesn't want to cook different food

Now it's your turn to:

- Have you had any similar experiences to the one mentioned in the story (if so, what happened, what was said, how did they react/feel)? Could you use that experience to create your 'scene'?
- If you haven't had this experience imagine what it would be like and how you think the scene would play out (What would they say to each other, what would the adults say, how would all the characters feel? How would the characters behave? What would you do if this happened to you?)

Be as creative as you want, and it's up to you to take the story in whichever direction you like!

Story 4: Soraya and the baby that loved sweets

Characters:

- (1) Soraya (the young interpreter)
- (2) Soraya's neighbour (who doesn't speak English) and her baby
- (3) The doctor

Setting:

The doctor's office

The Storyline:

Soraya is translating for her neighbour at the doctor's.

The woman's little boy is not eating proper food.

The doctor says that the mother has to stop giving him so many sweets.

The mother says if she doesn't give him sweets he screams and then she smacks him.

Now it's your turn to:

- Have you had any similar experiences to the one mentioned in the story (if so, what happened, what was said, how did they react/feel)? Could you use that experience to create your 'scene'?
- If you haven't had this experience imagine what it would be like and how you think the scene would play out (What would they say to each other, what would the

adults say, how would all the characters feel? How would the characters behave?
What would you do if this happened to you?)

Be as creative as you want, and it's up to you to take the story in whichever direction you like!

Appendix 3 Participant table according to school and activity

Name	Country of Origin	Age arrived in England at the time of the interview	Family languages other than English	Vignette interview	Drawing workshop	Sculpture workshop	Drama role-play workshop	Radio podcast workshop
Rutland School								
Kokumo	Nigerian origin but born in Italy	14 years	Italian and Igbo	✓	✓		✓	
Estera	Polish	13 years	Polish	✓	✓		✓	✓
Marta	Polish	Unknown	Polish		✓		✓	
Hristo	Bulgarian	14 years	Bulgarian	✓	✓		✓	✓
Samadhi	Sri Lankan origin but born in Italy	15 years	Italian and Singhalese	✓	✓		✓	
Janina	Lithuanian and Russian	13 years	Lithuanian and Russian	✓				
Ellora	Mauritian and Indian but born in Italy	13 years	Italian, Creole, Hindi and French	✓	✓		✓	✓
Rabiatou				✓			✓	
Daria	Romanian	12 years	Romanian	✓				
Elodie	Martinique but spent one year in Paris before coming to the UK	15 years	French, Boko French Patwa	✓			✓	
Vasil	Bulgarian	12 years	Bulgarian	✓				✓
Yana	Ukrainian and Russian	12 years	Ukrainian and Russian	✓				✓
Sadir	Bengali origin but born in Italy	Unknown	Italian and Bengali		✓		✓	
Tariq	Bengali origin but born in Italy	Unknown	Italian and Bengali		✓		✓	
Makin	Origin unknown but came to the UK via Italy	Unknown	Unknown		✓		✓	
Elijah	Bengali origin but born in Italy	14 years	Italian		✓		✓	

Safi	Bengali origin but born in Italy	14 years	Italian and Bengali					✓
Murray Green School								
Jola	Polish	6 years	Polish	✓		✓		✓
Marina	Ecuador origin, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	11 years	Spanish	✓		✓		✓
Ofelia	Ecuador origin, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain,	9 years	Spanish	✓		✓		✓
Isabella	Columbia origin, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	13 years	Spanish	✓				
Camila	Columbia	15 years	Spanish	✓				✓
Tereza	Portugal	12 years	Portuguese and Spanish	✓				
Kitty	Chinese in Hong Kong	Born in the UK but early years spent in China, Hong Kong. Return age unknown	Mandarin	✓		✓		✓
Ania	Polish	Unknown	Polish	✓		✓		✓
Sofia	Colombian origin,	Unknown	Spanish			✓		
Pilar	Ecuador and Columbia	Unknown	Spanish			✓		
Karina	Ecuador origin	Unknown	Spanish			✓		
Valeria	Ecuadorian origin,	Unknown	Spanish			✓		
Drake Academy								
Dimitar	Turkish in origin but born and grown up in Bulgaria	13 years old	Bulgarian and Turkish	✓				
Megi	Albanian in origin but born in the UK	Parents came in 2000	Albanian	✓				
Anca	Romania	unknown	Romanian	✓				
Lara	Angolan in origin but grew up in Portugal	8 years old	Portuguese	✓				

Simone	Polish	7 years old	Polish, Russian	✓				
Samir	Afghanistan	4 years old	Pashto, Urdu	✓				
Mihal	Romanian	11 years old	Romanian	✓				
Rabia	Turkish	9 years old	Turkish	✓				
Talia	Morroccan via Spain	12 years old	Spanish, Arabic	✓				

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