

Title: Adolescent Language Brokering and Adjustment: The Moderating Role of Autonomy Support in Chinese Immigrant Families

Authors: Josephine M. Hua, Catherine L. Costigan, & Joelle T. Taknint

Abstract:

As families immigrate to a new country, children often acculturate and learn the host-language more quickly than their parents. As a result, many children engage in *language brokering*, a phenomenon in which children provide translation and interpretation for their immigrant parents, so that the family may function more effectively in the new culture. This study explored the link between language brokering frequency and adjustment within 151 immigrant Chinese families. Applying Self-Determination Theory, we also examined the role of autonomy-supportive contexts in moderating these links, with the expectation that language brokering would present less risk to adjustment in autonomy-supportive contexts.

A higher frequency of language brokering was correlated with higher levels of adolescent internalizing and externalizing symptoms and more intense parent-adolescent conflict. Parents' use of reasoning, an indicator of an autonomy-supportive context, was associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing symptoms and less intense relationship conflict. Some evidence of moderation also emerged. For example, when mothers' use of reasoning was high, the negative relations between language brokering frequency and conflict intensity were attenuated. Thus, fostering autonomy-supportive contexts is a potential intervention target for mitigating risks associated with language brokering.