
*Estudios de
lingüística inglesa aplicada*



**DEVELOPING EFL ORAL SKILLS THROUGH LINGUISTIC
MEDIATION IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CLASSROOM**

**DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA ORAL EN INGLÉS
COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA A TRAVÉS DE LA MEDIACIÓN
LINGÜÍSTICA EN EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA**

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Linguistic mediation is one of the aspects to be developed within communicative competence, as established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2002). The aim of this study is to check whether linguistic mediation somehow contributes the development of other communicative constructs, in this case oral production. To this end, a group of 40 students from the 1st year of Bachillerato at a public secondary school in Madrid carried out a total of eight language mediation activities designed ad hoc. The activities were carried out once a week, in 50-minute sessions. The participants took an oral production test before and after the didactic intervention. Oral production was measured in terms of coherence and cohesion, lexical and grammatical variety, fluency, interaction, and pronunciation. The results showed that after the completion of the mediation activities, the students' fluency and interaction had improved significantly, thus suggesting the added value of linguistic mediation not only as important in itself but as a facilitator in the development of other communicative skills.

Key words: *linguistic mediation, oral production, EFL, mediation activities, secondary education*

La mediación lingüística es uno de los aspectos a desarrollar dentro de la competencia comunicativa, como así lo establece el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (2002). El presente estudio tiene como objetivo comprobar si dicha mediación lingüística contribuye de alguna manera al desarrollo de otras habilidades comunicativas, en este caso la producción oral. Para ello, un grupo de 40 estudiantes de 1º de Bachillerato de un instituto público de Madrid realizaron un total de ocho actividades de mediación lingüística diseñadas ad hoc. Las actividades se llevaron a cabo una vez por semana, en sesiones de 50 minutos. Los participantes realizaron un test de producción oral antes y después de la intervención didáctica. La producción oral se midió en términos de coherencia y cohesión, variedad de repertorio léxico y gramatical, fluidez, interacción y pronunciación. Los resultados mostraron que, tras la realización de las actividades de mediación, la fluidez y la interacción de los estudiantes había mejorado significativamente, sugiriendo así el valor añadido de la mediación lingüística no solo como importante en sí misma sino como instrumento facilitador en el desarrollo de otras habilidades comunicativas.

Palabras clave: *mediación lingüística, producción oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, actividades de mediación, educación secundaria.*

1. Introduction

In this globalized world without borders, the interaction with other languages is imperative, and this is why we need to know different linguistic realities and different contexts. Traditionally, the study of languages has been based on different pedagogical models, from the mere repetitive and mechanical learning of grammatical structures and lexical elements, to the present day in which learning is based on the interaction with other members of the linguistic community, which is essential for the co-construction of shared knowledge.

Additionally, it is important to mention the impact that multilingual awareness has had on language teaching. Students have access to many sources of knowledge located in dispersed geographical points with varied

linguistic and cultural connotations. This is where linguistic mediation comes into play, assuming an essential role in providing students with the necessary strategies for successful communication in the world in which we live.

In Spain, the Royal Decree 1041/2017 introduces linguistic mediation as one of the language activities in the new language level certification curricula. Mediation has recently been included as one of the elements to be developed by Official Language Schools. In addition, some secondary schools have already begun to work with mediation, since there are many voices pointing out that the new decrees on formal education in primary and secondary schools may add it.

Linguistic mediation arises with great potential both at the research level and at the didactic level. Traditionally, this concept has been hardly considered in the process of foreign language teaching and learning, in spite of the fact that the Council of Europe (2002) acknowledges it is a fundamental element, which is reflected in the Common European Framework for Languages, hereafter CEFR (Council of Europe, 2002).

Yet, this is changing and the educational community starts to show a growing interest. Literature on linguistic mediation has focused on limiting the term - an arduous affair - and on designing didactic proposals to work with and introduce it into the foreign language classroom. In this study, we intend to go further. Since mediation seems to be here to stay and is already present in legislation, we want to see if it has an effect on other communicative skills, more specifically on oral production.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Linguistic Mediation

Providing an exhaustive and clear-cut definition of linguistic mediation is a difficult and ambitious task. In the first place, traditionally, scholars have been more interested in the cultural aspect of mediation. In the second place, there is still a hot debate about how to conceptualize this communicative aspect. Conceptual limits are still blurred, as scholars do not seem to come to an agreement. Blini (2008) brings to light the

difficulties found when it comes to its definition and conceptual delimitation. He warns about: “the inappropriate use of this label has opened up the way to a variety of often arbitrary interpretations of the expression [...] it often tends to be confused with cultural mediation” (p.123). Carreras i Goicoechea and Pérez Vázquez (2010) define linguistic mediation as the reply to a new social picture, where we can find different cultures in contact and people from different origins, which irremediably leads to communicative conflicts. In fact, this concept tends to be used together with the term ‘cultural’ in the binomial ‘linguistic and cultural mediation’ (Sánchez, 2009). However, Blini (2009) states that cultural mediation is a more ingrained concept than linguistic mediation. In this sense, this author claims for the need to distinguish the latter from the former. Although both terms tend to overlap, cultural mediation has a solid tradition, whereas linguistic mediation is relatively recent, and therefore ambiguous.

One of the first attempts to approach the concept ‘linguistic mediation’ is found in Cassany (1996). His definition points to the professionalization of the term. He claims for the need of professional linguistic mediators who are able to deal with the challenges of a new social framework, showing deep knowledge of applied linguistics, documentation, and new technologies. However, it is important to highlight that linguistic mediation is conceived here as something apart from a professional activity. It will be adopted as a skill to be developed by L2 students in their teaching-learning process.

De Arriba (2003) acknowledges the link between translation and mediation, but adopts a firm position when it comes to highlighting the differences between the two activities. In fact, the author considers that the translation competence is conceived in terms which are too professional, so that its role would be only relevant in the area of specialization. For this reason, she suggests coining the term ‘linguistic mediation’ apart from the professional profile, and adding skills to find equivalences between different registers of the same language.

Thus, Cantero and De Arriba (2004a) understand linguistic mediation as opposed to translation. They suggest that the action of translating implies an accurate transfer of meaning from the original text, whereas mediation pursues the selective transmission of content, according to the interlocutor’s needs and interests. Accordingly, mediation goes beyond translation, as it

involves different mechanisms and goals. They illustrate this idea with the example of the word *pan* (bread, in English). This word alludes to different conceptualizations in different parts of the world. If we translate *pan* to Chinese, for instance, our interlocutors might not know exactly what you mean, as for them the concept of bread is different. The food that is called bread in China, Iran and Spain is different, cooked in a different way and with a different shape.

For Trovato (2014), linguistic mediation is a process where two or more interlocutors who are unable to communicate due to linguistic obstacles are set into communication. We need, therefore, a third part that intervenes so that efficient communication between those two interlocutors can be possible. Following this definition, we can distinguish different types of linguistic mediation according to the languages involved. It can be intralinguistic (L1-L1, L2-L2) or interlinguistic (L1-L2, L2-L1). It can also be given through different channels, whether oral or written. Cantero and Mendoza (2003) distinguish between oral mediation and text mediation. The former takes place between interlocutors within the framework of oral discourse. The latter, by contrast, does not offer a known interlocutor and interaction is not always possible –with some exception such as chatting. Both oral and text mediation can be possible in an intralinguistic or interlinguistic context.

2.2. Mediation in the L2 Teaching/Learning Process

Linguistic medication has not been systematically considered in the field of language teaching. In Trovato's words "el tema de la mediación lingüística en la didáctica de lenguas extranjeras es, desde luego, una novedad, pues disponemos de contados estudios en la materia sobre cómo las actividades de mediación lingüística pueden fomentar el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera" [the concept of linguistic mediation in foreign language teaching is, of course, something new, since we find few studies about how linguistic mediation activities can promote the learning of a foreign language] (2015, p.148). However, as Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, and Souberman (1978) state, already at the beginning of the 20th century, Vygotsky and his theory of language acquisition pointed to mediation in some way. He spoke of interaction as a fundamental underpinning for the development of linguistic ability. This was later taken up by Bruner and Ratner (1976) or Searle

(1984), in the seventies and eighties, with the theory of scaffolding. And already at the beginning of the 21st century, Lantolf (2006) links the so-called sociocultural theory to second language learning.

In this line, and in spite of the scarcity of studies on linguistic mediation in language learning, the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2002) explicitly mentions this concept as part of the communicative competence. In fact, and in line with the theories mentioned above, mediation activities are highlighted as fundamental to the normal functioning of our societies:

The language learner/user's communicative language competence is activated in the performance of the various language activities, involving reception, production, interaction or mediation. Each of these types of activity is possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both [...] activities of mediation make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Mediating language activities have an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies (CEFR, 2002: 14-15).

The fact that the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2002) underlines the importance of plurilingualism may itself justify why linguistic mediation is given a relevant place in language teaching. Indeed, it is undeniable that today the CEFR is a mandatory consultation text for all professionals in the field of modern languages (postgraduate students, language teachers, linguists, philologists), as it provides satisfactory answers to any type of doubt or problem related to the process of teaching/learning languages.

It is important to underline that the incorporation into the CEFR of mediation activities and strategies, together with the more traditional skills of comprehension and production, is considered as an important step forward in the field of foreign language teaching. It is for this reason that the Framework advocates that mediation be given pride of place in the foreign language classroom. That is, real communication takes place outside the classroom, and it is very common in a multilingual and globalized society to find situations in which someone has to mediate between two or more parties. Vez (2011) states that the ability to transfer meaning in contemporary society should be developed and we should train students in the use of their innate potential to do so from one language to another. Therefore, this author argues that an "integrated treatment of languages" (p.104) is vital in education for multilingual citizenship. In a

similar vein, Cantero and De Arriba (2004a) highlight that the multilingual approach focuses on the individuals' ability to broaden their linguistic experience within new contexts: from their first experiences in the family register through the acquisition of new registers, to formal contexts, but also through new contexts in other languages. All this knowledge and this ability to communicate in different languages, dialects, and contexts are not kept in "watertight compartments, but the individual develops a communicative competence in which all these elements relate to each other and interact" (p.10). It is within this multilingual and diverse framework where linguistic mediation has become increasingly important.

In the latest version of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2016), the aspects of linguistic mediation by levels are specified for the first time, as it had been previously done with the rest of the constructs within the communicative competence. The construct of mediation is divided into three items: mediating a text, mediating concepts, and mediating communication. The first one has to do with conveying and expressing information taking a text as a basis. The second one has to do with the transmission of ideas. In the third one, the student is expected to contribute and support within shared communication, taking into account the sociolinguistic context. Linguistic mediation thus takes on special relevance, as it is presented at the same level as other communicative activities.

From a holistic perspective, linguistic mediation is an inclusive competence. Cantero (2002) explains that we can find how several linguistic skills that are developed separately throughout the teaching process are integrated in the very concept of linguistic mediation. In the traditional perspective of the four communication skills (reading comprehension, writing, listening comprehension and speaking), things like interaction or mediation are no more than secondary or even inexistent aspects of communication in language learning. However, in the CEFR (2016), a new perspective is presented, in which communication skills are organized into four types of activities and strategies: production (oral or written), reception (oral or reading), interaction – which for the first time is presented as a specific and different activity from the mere sum of production and reception – and mediation. In this case, authors such as Cantero and De Arriba (2004b), Ocampo (2015), Defior (2005), and Arroyo, Beard, Olivetti, Balpinar and Silva (2009) mention different micro-skills for the oral and written context that can be developed in the foreign language classroom,

and which are closely related to linguistic mediation: summarizing; paraphrasing (using other words to explain something); providing explanations and clarifications; making an oral translation; or negotiating (reaching an agreement with the interlocutor). Some of these micro-skills such as summarizing or paraphrasing are also present in the written context; but we find others which are specifically applied in writing: citing or using glosses to make the text more accessible to the reader.

Authors such as Passos (2010) and Trovato (2015) remark the benefits of including mediation activities in the foreign language classroom. Passos observes how mediation enables L2 students to delve into their linguistic knowledge and how it increases participation in class. On the one hand, there is a value in mediation itself as a communicative aspect that students must develop to become efficient and autonomous when using a foreign language. Additionally, mediation activities might help to develop linguistic competence in general. In fact, the authors advocate that mastering a foreign language should not only mean being able to express yourself correctly and fluently in both the written and spoken context. Moreover, having advanced language skills requires a new language learning model. It is in this framework that the development of the linguistic mediation competence finds its *raison d'être*.

3. Aim

Up to now, research about linguistic mediation in the L2 classroom has focused on didactic proposals to work on this competence. The present study, however, pursues to observe whether linguistic mediation has a positive effect in the development of L2 speaking.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Forty students took part in the study. They were divided into two groups, but they had the same English teacher and methodology. There were 25 girls and 15 boys. Students were in their first year of *Bachillerato* at a state secondary school in Madrid. They were between 16 and 17 years old, and

it was the first time they coursed that academic year. Given the number of hours they had been exposed to the English language, their level was considered to be Intermediate.

They spoke Spanish as their native language and could not speak any other foreign language except for English. All of them belonged to a similar socioeconomic framework. They received four hours of English a week, of which one was entirely devoted to speaking. This skill was practiced through different activities such as debates, oral presentations, and traditional role plays. The oral presentations were individual, the role plays were normally performed in pairs, whereas the big group took part in the debates.

4.2. Instruments and Procedure

During six weeks, the students practiced speaking through linguistic mediation activities. Eight mediation activities were designed for the study: are you a good cook?; how does it work?; what's wrong with me, doc?; special at the table; searching for the perfect flatmate; accommodation in Valencia; going to the airport; and the carousel.

Activity 1: Are you a good cook?

In this activity, one student has a recipe written in Spanish. The way information is displayed in the text is schematic, that is to say, the recipe contains a list of ingredients and short and direct instructions. It is also illustrated with pictures representing each step. The mediator student has to explain another student how to cook the dish of the recipe using the English language (see appendix I).

Activity 2: How does it work?

This activity is done in pairs. One student has to explain another one how to use a device. The mediator student reads a text with the instructions in Spanish supported by some pictures. The chosen devices are an electric coffee machine, a voice recorder, and a kettle.

Activity 3: What's wrong with me, doc?

The student reads the following situation: "Your friend and you are spending some days in London. The second day of your stay she isn't

feeling very well. You decide to take your friend to the hospital. Your friend can't speak English, so you are in charge of mediating between her and the doctor. Here are the symptoms: temperature, headache, vomit". In the activity, one student is the mediator and another one is the doctor, who has some questions ready to be asked in English.

Activity 4: Special at the table

In this activity the students mediate between a waiter and their cousin's partner, who is Australian. This is the context: You, your cousin, and her couple, Jane, are at a restaurant for dinner. Jane is vegetarian and can't eat gluten. She also has diabetes. She is Australian and can't speak Spanish. She asks you to mediate between her and the waiter, who only speaks Spanish.

Activity 5: Searching for the perfect flatmate

The context of this activity is the following: Your friend is looking for a flatmate to share a flat the next academic course at university. One of the candidates comes from the USA and can't speak Spanish. Your friend has a very low level of English and needs your help, as the American candidate seems to be a good option. You have to mediate between the candidate and your friend in the interview.

Activity 6: Accommodation in Valencia

The context of the activity is the following: Your new Irish neighbors (two of your classmates) want to spend a weekend in Valencia for their anniversary. They find a very interesting webpage with different options for accommodation, but they can't understand Spanish, so they ask you for help. The student has a copy of what is supposed to be a webpage with different options for accommodation. S/he has to explain the different options using the English language.

Activity 7: Going to the airport

The context of this activity is the following: Your friends from Canada have spent a week in Madrid. They need to go back to Canada and you can't take them to the airport. Tell them the different options they have to get there. In this activity, the student has different options on a paper written in Spanish. S/he has to read all the options and use the English language to transmit this information. The options are written in a schematic way, for instance: taxi, 30 euros, 20 minutes (see appendix II).

Activity 8: The carousel

In groups of three people, according to the technique called Carousel, one student reads a fragment of a text in Spanish individually and then has to summarize it in English orally for the classmate on the left (without the rest of them knowing what they are saying). Then, this second student explains to the third what s/he has understood. Then, the last members of each group have to explain to the large group and in English what the first student is supposed to have read. Each group has a different text. As there are four groups of five people, four texts are used. All the texts are popular stories with license for free distribution (see appendix III). The whole class, with the help of the teacher, decides which version of the ones that have been exposed by the last members of each group is closest to the original version found in the Spanish text.

The activities were carried out along the six speaking sessions of March and part of April. Activities 1 and 2 were done in the first session. Each of them took around 25 minutes, so that all students could practice. The second session included activities 3 and 4. The time devoted to each of them was similar to the first session with activities 1 and 2. The rest of sessions only involved one mediation activity, as they required more time to be developed given their nature. Activity 5 was practiced during the third session. The fourth and fifth sessions were based on accommodation in Valencia and going to the airport, respectively. The last session consisted of different carousels.

Two weeks before starting with the mediation activities, students took a speaking test. This test consisted of three parts. The first two parts were individual and the third one was done in pairs. First, students had to answer common questions related to their family, their neighborhood, and their home. The second part consisted of describing a picture for 1 minute. The pictures are related to the topics they have seen in class up to that moment. In the last part of the test, in pairs, students have to discuss about choosing one option among the different ones displayed. They might have to decide which film to see at the cinema or which type of food to order at a restaurant. They will have to interact and come to an agreement in four minutes.

The students' performance will be assessed with an analytic rubric (see table 1). This rubric was created ad hoc, taking into consideration the CEFR (2016) principles and the context of our study. This instrument is

composed of five items, evaluated in a scale of five levels. The items are coherence and cohesion, linguistic variety and accuracy, fluency, interaction, and pronunciation. Five levels are described for each item, from very good (5) to very poor (1). Luoma (2004) states that the number of categories for the evaluation of oral production should not exceed 5, as it would imply an unnecessary overload for the evaluator.

	Coherence and cohesion	Variety and accuracy (vocabulary and grammar)	Fluency	Interaction	Pronunciation
Very good	Perfectly understandable and organized speech and ideas with very relevant content	Accuracy and variety in the structures and vocabulary used	Follows conversation without any problem. Ideas are expressed very fluently	Reacts perfectly to questions and opinions	No mistakes in common, non-specialized words. Perfectly intelligible with very good rhythm and intonation.
Good	Comprehensible, well-organized ideas and discourse with relevant content	Remarkable accuracy and repertoire without systematic errors in the structures and lexicon used	Follows conversation and expresses ideas fluently.	Reacts to questions and opinions. Very few and short pauses.	Few errors with intelligible pronunciation, good rhythm and intonation.
Acceptable	Ideas and speech sufficiently understandable and organized, with relevant content in most part	Acceptable accuracy and repertoire but mistakes that do not affect communication	Fluent discourse but for some pauses.	Understands and reacts to questions. Basic communication is established	Acceptable pronunciation with some errors that do not impede comprehension
Poor	Understandable speech making an effort. Somewhat disorganized ideas. Content not very relevant	Lack of variety and improvable accuracy with systematic errors that sometimes affect communication	Slow with a notable number of pauses and lack of autonomy.	Reacts to questions and opinions with difficulty. Difficult communication.	Inadequate pronunciation requiring effort on the part of the interlocutor for comprehension, with excessive influence of the L1
Very poor	Incomprehensible speech, with disorganized ideas and irrelevant content	Remarkable lack of variety and accuracy which seriously affect communication	Very slow with many and very long pauses. Very little autonomy.	Barely reacts to questions and opinions. Minimal communication.	Numerous pronunciation errors that make comprehension very difficult

Table 1. Speaking rubric

After the six mediation sessions, another test with the same format was taken. In order to reduce test effect – that is, the possible effect that the same questions of the pre-test could have in the post-test -, the questions were different, although with the same level of difficulty. In the first part, students answered common questions related to their friends, and likes and dislikes. The pictures to be described in the second part were different. In the last part of the test, in pairs, students had to discuss about choosing one option among the different ones displayed. They had to decide about which holidays they preferred or which plan was the best for a Saturday night.

4.3. Data Analysis

In order to find out whether the mediation activities had an effect on the students' speaking skills, descriptive and inferential statistic techniques were carried out. As for descriptive, the global means of the speaking pre and post-tests, as well as the means of the individual items that composed the speaking rubric were calculated. The comparison of the means was run through the inferential analysis of variance (ANOVA). This technique helps to know whether the differences among groups of data are statistically significant.

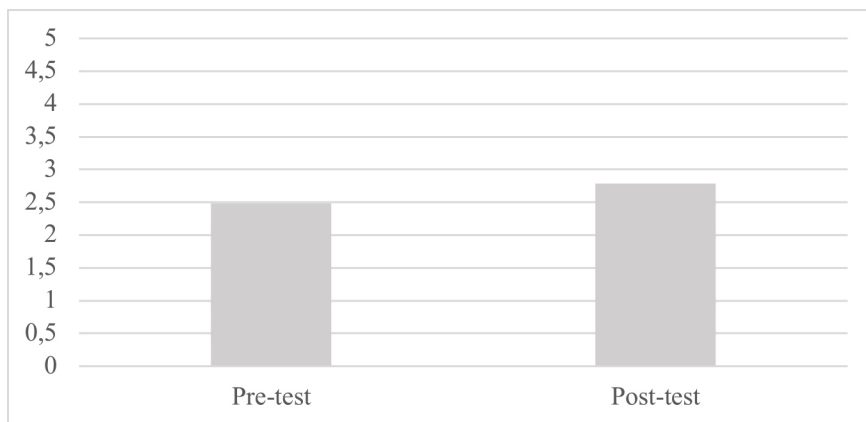


Figure 1. Mark means of the speaking pre and post test

5. Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the means of the pre- and the post-test. The mean in the pre-test is 2.48 whereas in the post-test it goes up to 2.79. In order to find out whether this increase is statistically significant, an analysis of variance or ANOVA was carried out (see table 2). In this case, the critical level associated to F (sig. 0.06) is higher than .05, which means the null hypothesis that the population means are equal cannot be rejected. In other words, the increase in the students' post-test means is not significant.

	Sum of squares	df	Quadratic mean	F	Sig
Inter-groups	1.33	1	1.33	3.63	0.06
Intra-groups	20.56	56	0.36		
Total	21.90	57			

Table 2. ANOVA for mark means of pre-test and post-test

These results seem to suggest that linguistic mediation is not determinant in the overall speaking results. Pomposo (2016) warns about the subjectivity of this skill and recommends to avoid reducing the construct of oral expression to a global and holistic mark, be aware of its complexity, and analyze it accordingly. Canale and Swain (1980) explain that speaking is a very complex skill which implies different linguistic aspects such as grammar, discourse, strategy, and sociolinguistics. Green, Christopher, and Lam (2002) add discussion as another speaking element. In fact, the mark obtained and analyzed here is the result of the combination of different communicative aspects contained in the rubric. All these aspects are inspired in the CEFR (2016), which also acknowledges the complexity of the skill.

In this sense, it was decided to compare the marks of each individual item that composes the analytic rubric in the pre- and the post-test, that is, coherence and cohesion, variety and precision, fluency, interaction, and pronunciation (see figure 2). As it was specified above, the speaking rubric was composed of five items. In this case, minimum changes are found in

three of them, namely cohesion and coherence, variety and precision, and pronunciation. However, the marks in fluency and interaction are higher after mediation activities are done (see table 3).

Speaking construct	Pre-test	Post-test
Cohesion and coherence	3.15	3.19
Variety and precision	2.77	2.80
Fluency	2.22	3
Interaction	2.17	2.82
Pronunciation	2.77	2.77

Table 3. Pre-test and post-test means

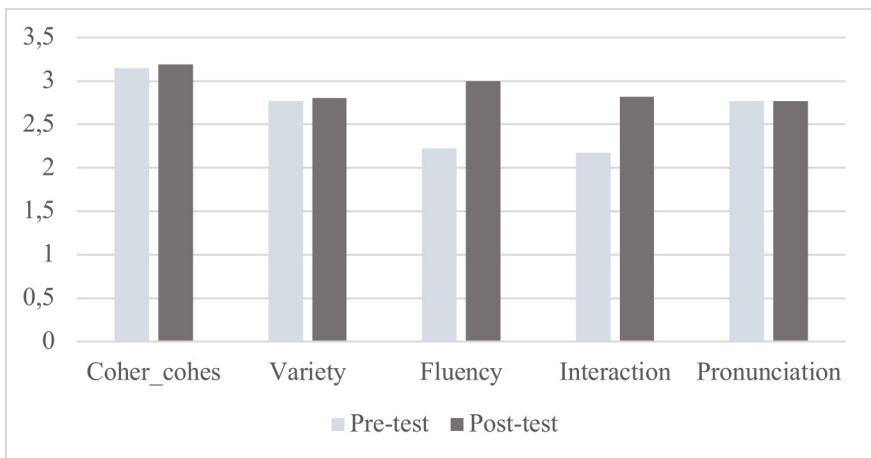


Figure 2. Means of individual items

It was decided to compare the pre- and post-test means of these three items that increased after the mediation activities. Table 4 shows the ANOVA analysis for fluency and interaction. Their higher marks in the post-test are statistically significant. Both cases show $P = 0.000 (< .05)$. Therefore, results indicate that mediation activities have had a positive effect in two aspects of the speaking practice, which are fluency and interaction.

		Sum of squares	df	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
Fluency	Inter-groups	12.80	1	12.80	24.71	0.00
	Intra-groups	40.40	78	0.51		
	Total	53.20	79			
Interaction	Inter-groups	8.45	1	8.45	14.46	0.00
	Intra-groups	45.55	78	0.58		
	Total	54	79			

Table 4. ANOVA for fluency and interaction

The fact that interaction and fluency are the two speaking aspects that have been significantly influenced by linguistic meditation is in line with the studies by Douglas (1997) and Richards (2006), or those by Lennon (1990) and Rehbein (1987). For Douglas (1997), interaction is based on cognitive negotiation and implies discourse reciprocity as well as an intention of continuity. Thus, related to this idea, Richards (2006) states that interaction “serves a primarily social function” (p. 2). As mentioned above, linguistic mediation has an essentially social purpose, as it seeks to overcome communication obstacles between interlocutors, which therefore implies cognitive negotiation mechanisms. In this sense, it seems that when resorting to mediation activities, part of the actions involved in interaction are set in motion.

As for fluency, Lennon (1990) explains that “fluency reflects the speaker’s ability to focus the listener’s attention on their message by presenting a finished product, rather than inviting the listener to focus on the working of the production mechanisms” (p. 391). Indeed, mediation is closely related to fluency. One of the actions in the mediator’s role is, actually, to provide a version of the original message that is intelligible to the interlocutor. This is why Lennon’s affirmation that the listener’s attention is paid to the message as a product can undoubtedly contribute to understanding.

All activities implied the presence of the L1 in the textual input. Some scholars might find L1 inadequate for an L2 learning context. Nonetheless,

Trovato (2014) was followed when he states that using L1 in foreign language teaching makes it possible to strengthen the process of acquiring an L2 and it is not an obstacle, but it can simultaneously favor the development of certain skills. Scholars such as Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), Turnbull (2001), or Cook (2001) claim for a role of the L1 in the L2 classroom. Their studies coincide in that “some use of the L1, even in an L2 setting, could be useful” (Storch and Wigglesworth 2003: 768) if it is integrated in the right way. Indeed, Turnbull (2001) agrees with Cook (2001) that despite the L1 may have important benefits for the development of the L2, it should not become the center of the teaching activity, rather a tool which should be wisely used. The mediation activities that have been suggested here are in line with this idea.

6. Conclusion

In this study, it was observed that, in addition to having a value in itself, mediation contributes to the development of communicative competence, more specifically fluency and interaction in oral production. Therefore, greater importance must be given to teaching and to promoting its development from the early stages of the L2 learning process.

Strengthening the linguistic mediation ability in the foreign language class is the most appropriate way for students to acquire an integral vision of what it is like to communicate in a foreign language and to explore all the dimensions of their language training.

More empirical studies are needed to analyze the potential positive effects of mediation on communicative competence in general, and on productive skills in particular, not only in intermediate levels but also in Elementary and advanced levels. It is indeed this scarcity of empirical studies on linguistic mediation in foreign language contexts which made it difficult to compare the present results with similar research.

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APPENDIX I

Activity 1. Recipe of the apple pie in Spanish.

INGREDIENTES

4 manzanas

150 gr. de mantequilla

½ litro de leche

1 huevo

8 cucharadas de azúcar

5 cucharadas de mermelada de albaricoque

Mezclar en un recipiente la leche, la mantequilla y el azúcar

Batir el huevo y añadir a la mezcla

Pelar las manzanas y partirlas en rodajas finas

Añadir la manzana a la mezcla

Calentar el horno a 150 grados

Meter la mezcla en el horno durante 20 minutos

Servir frío

APPENDIX II

Activity 7. Options to go to the airport.

Option 1. Taxi: 30 minutos al aeropuerto, 30 euros, flexible.

Option 2. Tren: 10 minutos andando hasta la estación de tren, varias paradas, 45 minutos hasta el aeropuerto, 4,50 euros, cada 20 minutos.

Option 3. Autobús: 20 minutos andando hasta la parada de autobús, dos paradas, 40 minutos al aeropuerto, 3 euros, cada media hora.

APPENDIX III

Activity 8. Text 1. El dragon.

En las cercanías de un pueblo, en una gran sima, se escondía un dragón de siete cabezas que tenía atemorizada la comarca; devoraba todo cuanto encontraba: hombres, ganados, cualquier cosa que consideraba comestible. Nadie se atrevía a transitar por aquellos caminos. Todas las familias tenían algún miembro muerto por el dragon.

Angustiados los vecinos se reunieron para encontrar alguna solución a tan grave mal. Lo mejor hubiera sido matar al dragón. Pero, ¿quién se atrevería a hacerlo? El que hasta entonces lo había intentado estaba ya bajo tierra. Por fin decidieron llegar a un arreglo con el dragón mediante un pacto que consistía en entregarle cada año una doncella del pueblo con la condición de dejar en paz a los demás habitantes. El monstruo aceptó tal convenio.

Todos los años echaban a suerte entre los vecinos para saber a qué doncella le correspondía ser entregada al dragón. Se la llevaba cerca de la sima y la bestia la devoraba. Aquel año le había correspondido a la hija del rey. El noble padre, angustiado, prometió que obtendría la mano de la princesa aquél que la liberase del dragón.

Llegado el día, ataron a un árbol a la hija del rey abandonándola a su triste destino. El padre estaba desesperado; ningún voluntario se había presentado para matar al dragón. La muchacha lloraba aterrorizada. Poco faltaba para que el monstruo devorase a la princesa, cuando llegó un pastor con un enorme perro y preguntó a la joven por qué estaba allí en aquel árbol. El pastor se quedó a su lado.

Con gran estrépito apareció el dragón. El pastor lanzó a su perro que le dejó inmóvil, mientras que el muchacho pudo darle muerte. Soltó enseguida a la princesa. Los criados del rey, que estaban subidos a unos árboles cercanos, se acercaron rápidamente y uno de ellos vistió a su señora y cortó las siete cabezas del dragón. El pastor pudo arrancar la lengua a cada una de las cabezas. El rey dio una gran fiesta para celebrar la salvación de la princesa. La presidían el rey y su hija y el prometido de ésta, que era el que cortó las siete cabezas.

Al final, apareció el pastor con el perro. Los criados querían echarle, pero pudo acercarse al rey diciéndole que él era el que había matado al dragón. El novio oficial protestó enérgicamente, demostrando que él era el matador al enseñar las siete cabezas. El pastor le interrumpió diciendo: -Pero esas cabezas no tienen lengua. Admirado quedó al comprobarlo.

El muchacho enseñó entonces las siete lenguas convenciendo así a todos de que el héroe era él. La hija del rey le reconoció como su salvador y se fijó la boda, que fue celebrada con todo lujo y esplendor.

Activity 8. Text 2. La farmacia.

Nasrudín estaba sin trabajo y preguntó a algunos amigos a qué profesión podía dedicarse. Ellos le dijeron: “A ver Nasrudín, tú eres un hombre muy capaz y sabes mucho sobre las propiedades medicinales de las hierbas. Podrías abrir una farmacia”.

Nasrudín volvió a su casa, le estuvo dando vueltas a la cuestión durante unos días, y finalmente se dijo: “Sí, es una buena idea, creo que soy capaz de ser farmacéutico”. Claro que Nasrudín estaba pasando por una época en la que deseaba ser muy importante. “No solo abriré una farmacia que se ocupe de hierbas. Abriré un establecimiento enorme y produciré un gran impacto”.

Entonces compró un local, instaló los estantes y vitrinas, y cuando llegó el momento de pintar la fachada colocó un andamio, lo cubrió con sábanas, y se puso a trabajar sin que nadie pudiera ver nada. A nadie le dejó ver cómo estaba pintando la fachada y qué nombre pondría a la farmacia.

Después de unos días distribuyo panfletos que decían: “Mañana es el gran día. Inauguración: mañana a las 9”. Todas las personas del pueblo y de los pueblos de los alrededores vinieron y se concentraron expectantes frente a la farmacia.

A las 9 en punto salió Nasrudín y, con gesto teatral, sacó la sábana que cubría la fachada de la tienda. La gente que allí estaba vio un gran cartel que decía: “FARMACIA CÓSMICA Y GALÁCTICA DE NASRUDÍN, CON INFLUENCIAS PLANETARIAS.

La gran mayoría de personas que asistieron a la inauguración quedaron muy impresionadas. Aquel día hizo mucho negocio, la gente no dejaba de comprar. Por la tarde el maestro de la escuela del pueblo le visitó y le dijo: “Francamente Nasrudín, estas afirmaciones que usted hace son un poco dudosas”. “¿Dudosas por qué?”, respondió Nasrudín. Todas las afirmaciones que yo hago sobre las influencias planetarias son absolutamente ciertas. Cuando sale el sol, abro la farmacia. Cuando el sol se pone, la cierro.

Activity 8. Text 3. El rey incrédulo.

Un buen rey tenía como amigo y consejero a su primer ministro. Era un hombre tranquilo y sabio que le ayudaba en lo que sabía y podía. Este ministro y consejero solía utilizar la expresión “es para bien” y lo más probable era que siempre acertara, sabía cuando hablar y qué decir.

Aunque un buen día el rey, pelando una manzana, cometió un error de corte y se cortó y amputó su dedo pulgar. Se lanzó a gritar y con los ojos desorbitados miró a su ministro. El ministro bastante sereno le miró y dijo: “Es para bien”.

El rey se airó todavía más y le gritó: Sólo por el aprecio que te tengo no te mando cortar la cabeza, pero te voy a encarcelar por decirme semejante tontería: ¿Cómo será para bien si perdí mi dedo? El ministro mientras era apresado y llevado a prisión miró al rey y dijo de nuevo: “Es para bien”. El rey pensó que era una locura pensar eso.

Pasado un tiempo unos enemigos del rey dominaron y conquistaron sus tierras y se apoderaron de su palacio, lo apresaron y decidieron quemarlo en sacrificio a sus dioses por haberles dejado ganar a éste rey. Así organizaron un gran mástil al que ataron al rey con cuerdas y le pusieron paja en la base para quemarlo vivo. Cuando uno de ellos exclamó: ¡No podemos quemarle y sacrificarlo a nuestros dioses, le falta un dedo, está incompleto, sería una ofensa para los dioses! Otro exclamó: “Busquemos pues, al primer ministro”.

Buscaron y buscaron pero nadie imaginaba que el primer ministro estaba en prisión por castigo y orden del rey; así que no pudieron quemarlo tampoco a él. Pasados unos meses, unos aliados del rey de países vecinos lucharon, expulsaron y vencieron a sus enemigos y ayudaron a devolver al rey su poder, su trono y sus tierras.

El rey, una vez libre y con poder otra vez, lo primero que quiso fue hablar con el primer ministro para comunicarle que tuvo razón y lo quería premiar por su sabiduría. Una vez ante él, el rey dijo: “Tuvisteis razón mi buen amigo, ministro y consejero. Fue para bien que me amputé el dedo. Por ese motivo no me quemaron, si no ahora estaría muerto, y fue para

bien que te encarcelase, si no te habrían matado a ti. ¡Quiero darte riquezas y tesoros por haber sido tan sabio!”

El ministro le dijo: “Todo este tiempo en la cárcel me sirvió para reflexionar y llegué a la conclusión de que ya soy un anciano y quiero dejar la vida de palacio. Deseo dedicar todo el tiempo que me quede, antes de morir, a meditar y cultivar mi espiritualidad como ermitaño en los bosques, en contacto más íntimo con la naturaleza”.

El rey miró a su ministro, y ésta vez el rey contestó: “Es para bien”. El ministro le devolvió la mirada, sonrió y dijo: “Veo que habéis aprendido la lección querido amigo”. Le despidió y se alejó paseando tranquilamente hasta desaparecer por entre los árboles.

Activity 8. Text 4. La isla de los inventos.

La primera vez que Lucas oyó hablar de la Isla de los Inventos era todavía muy pequeño, pero las maravillas que oyó le sonaron tan increíbles que quedaron marcadas para siempre en su memoria. Así que desde que era un chaval, no dejó de buscar e investigar cualquier pista que pudiera llevarle a aquel fantástico lugar. La Isla de los Inventos era un lugar secreto en que se reunían los grandes sabios del mundo para aprender e inventar juntos, y su acceso estaba totalmente restringido. Para poder pertenecer a aquel selecto club, era necesario haber realizado algún gran invento para la humanidad, y sólo entonces se podía recibir una invitación única y especial con instrucciones para llegar a la isla.

Lucas pasó sus años de juventud estudiando e inventando por igual. Cada nueva idea la convertía en un invento, y si algo no lo comprendía, buscaba quien le ayudara a comprenderlo. Pronto conoció otros jóvenes a los que contó los secretos y maravillas de la Isla de los Inventos. También ellos soñaban con recibir la invitación. Con el paso del tiempo, la decepción por no recibirla dio paso a una colaboración y sus interesantes inventos individuales pasaron a convertirse en increíbles máquinas y aparatos pensados entre todos. Reunidos en casa de Lucas sus invenciones empezaron a ser conocidas por todo el mundo, alcanzando a mejorar todos los ámbitos de la vida; pero ni siquiera así recibieron la invitación para unirse al club.

No se desanimaron. Siguieron aprendiendo e inventando cada día, y para conseguir más y mejores ideas. Un día, mucho tiempo después, Lucas, ya anciano, hablaba con un joven brillantísimo a quien había escrito para tratar de que se uniera a ellos. Le contó el gran secreto de la Isla de los Inventos, y de cómo estaba seguro de que algún día recibirían la carta. Pero entonces el joven inventor le interrumpió sorprendido: “¿cómo? ¿pero no es ésta la verdadera Isla de los Inventos? ¿no es su carta la auténtica invitación?”

Y anciano como era, Lucas miró a su alrededor para darse cuenta de que su sueño se había hecho realidad en su propia casa, y de que no existía más ni mejor Isla de los Inventos que la que él mismo había creado con sus amigos. Y se sintió feliz al darse cuenta de que siempre había estado en la isla, y de que su vida de inventos y estudio había sido verdaderamente feliz.

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