

# ***Spanish Language Teachers' Mediation Practices in Higher Education***

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## Abstract

The discussion of the concept 'mediation' in foreign language education has rapidly increased over the last few years. However, mediation from the teacher's point of view and their agency in mediation processes in the foreign language classroom is a field that still requires further exploration. In response to the need to get a better understanding of how language teachers actually create opportunities for their learners to establish connections between languages and cultures, this thesis aims to explore the explicit mechanisms used by Spanish teachers in higher education (HE) when they mediate target language and culture in online and face-to-face teaching practices.

For this research, a deliberately small sample of four Spanish practitioners in HE was selected, and a first-hand corpus of naturally occurring instances of mediation in the classroom is analysed through an inductive constructivist approach informed by thematic analytic methods. The methodology applied follows an interpretive inquiry model using qualitative methods and it includes different tools: classroom observations, stimulated recall (SR) sessions and interviews. The analysis of the examples of mediation practices in the classroom indicate that the strategies used are overlapping and multilayered which allow the creation of an effective, multidimensional way to facilitate mediation for students.

Hence, this study offers empirical and detailed evidence of real instances of mediation strategies in language classrooms in HE in the UK, and it breaks new ground by discovering how this is achieved in practice through combining different strategies together. It finds that mediation has multiple implications for language teacher education, and discusses the further implications for foreign language teacher training in the light of the results of this research.



**We are like islands in the sea, separate on the surface but connected in the deep**  
(William James 1842-1910)



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CA</b>	Content Analysis
<b>CEFR</b>	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>C1</b>	First Culture
<b>ECML</b>	European Council of Modern Languages
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELT</b>	English Language Teaching
<b>ELE</b>	Español como Lengua Extranjera
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>FL</b>	Foreign Language
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Academy
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>ICC</b>	Intercultural Communicative Competence
<b>IMS</b>	Inventory of Mediation Strategies
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>LC1</b>	Native Language and Culture
<b>L2/LC2</b>	Second Language/Target Language and Second or Target language and Culture
<b>MFL</b>	Modern Foreign Languages
<b>ML</b>	Modern Languages
<b>MLE</b>	Mediated Learning Experience
<b>NNS</b>	Non-Native Speaker
<b>NS</b>	Native Speaker
<b>NVC</b>	Nonverbal Communication
<b>NVB</b>	Nonverbal Behaviour
<b>OWRI</b>	Open World Research Initiative
<b>RQ</b>	Research Question
<b>SCT</b>	Sociocultural Theory
<b>SLT</b>	Spanish Language Teaching
<b>ST</b>	Stimulated Recall
<b>TA</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>TC</b>	Target Culture
<b>TL</b>	Target Language
<b>UCML</b>	University Council of Modern Languages
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development



## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Having worked as a Spanish language teacher at university level for over a decade, tying linguistic and cultural concepts in my native language with those of my students, a clear interest in understanding the teacher's active role when bringing together known and unknown worlds was raised. I frequently share part of myself, my identity and my history in each lesson I deliver. For me, teaching Spanish is not only about the language and culture but is also a personal connection to enable students to see the world others live in, to compare it with their own and to share this process in the classroom. This practice of bringing cultures and languages closer has led me to wonder about the processes of cultural and linguistic mediation that teachers of Spanish as a foreign language engage in.

This research is linked to a bigger work, the AHRC-funded project *Language Acts and Worldmaking*. The aim of the project is to rethink and transform modern language learning and teaching by shedding light on how language shapes our worlds. My investigation is part of the *Diasporic identities and the politics of language teaching* strand of the project, which conceives language teachers as “active worldmakers who move seamlessly between different linguistic and cultural worlds” (Álvarez et al., 2022) and explores their role as mediators. It is precisely this role of teacher-as-mediator that, in conjunction with my curiosity about investigating Spanish teaching processes, essentially inspired this thesis. The teacher as a mediator must be a creative, social and communicative agent to encourage students in their task of communication and to interrelate between the target language and culture and other worlds. Investigating how Spanish language teachers manage to create those connections between the known and the unknown and mediate linguistic concepts alongside cultural insight and experiences in the classroom is the point of departure for this study.

### 1.2. The research context

In the last two decades, an increasing amount of attention has been devoted to the language classroom as a site for the development of interlingual and intercultural understanding (Sercu, 2005; Gibbons, 2003; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001; Borghetti, 2019). In the previous communicative paradigm of the 20th century, the native monolingual speaker was considered the norm, however that model gave way to the intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997). This target shifted to encompass competency for both teachers and learners in the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language education (Álvarez, 2007). One of the key issues in intercultural language teaching is how the



experience of teaching a language can help students glimpse the cultural worlds of language users, specifically how the exploration of language structure and use gives learners insights into the links between language and broader cultural norms, assumptions and values (McConachy, 2018). This is not simply a matter about studying the 'other', the process of foreign language learning necessarily involves bringing different cultural systems into a relationship with each other (Byram, 1997). That is, within an intercultural perspective, language learning is a process in which learners engage with new linguistic structures, practices and meanings while also developing reflexive awareness of their own naturalised linguistic practices and underlying cultural assumptions.

This process of bringing different cultural and linguistic systems into a relationship within the learning process is often understood through the notion of 'mediation'. For instance, McConachy and Liddicoat (2016, p. 39) suggest that the "process of mediation begins from the learner's own perception of cultural difference across languages and becomes more sophisticated as they attempt to interpret that difference". However, in the typical classroom, there is usually not much space for reflection on language or comparison across cultures. Moreover, the ability to engage in such high-level analytical and reflective processes does not necessarily come naturally or easily for language learners (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013), nor even, perhaps we could add, for teachers. This necessarily foregrounds the important role of the teacher in encouraging students to explore the cultural meanings attached to language structure. By including a reflection on potential gaps in meaning across languages that derive from culturally embedded ways of thinking into the curriculum, teachers may have a better opportunity at bringing new languages and cultures closer to what students already know and experience.

There is increased recognition that the language teacher is not simply responsible for passing on linguistic skills, but for helping students explore the depth and complexity of linguistic meanings across languages and cultures (e.g., Kearney, 2015; Kohler, 2015). While the role of mediation in the learning process has received a certain amount of attention, much less is known about mediation in the teaching process. As Medgyes (1992, p. 340) claimed, "the road to the learner leads through the teacher and teacher-related research should therefore be increased", therefore this work is focused on the teaching side of mediation. Mediation can be initiated by either the teacher delivering the session with potential mediation opportunities between languages and cultures in the classroom, or the students enriching each interaction with their own previous experiences in different languages and cultures, thus co-constructing intercultural mediation. Liddicoat (2022, p. 55) defines intercultural mediation as the processes involved in "coming to know the previously unknown, interpreting and reflecting on interpretations, and applying the results of these



processes to communication". These practical contributions made by teachers can be iterative, and it do not always follow the same pattern. For instance, in learning about the topic of university education in Spain, a student could ask the meaning of 'housemate' and the teacher could take the chance to mediate that new word in Spanish but also the idea of how 'flatmate' is actually more common in Spain. Following the curiosity of the student (or not), the teacher could continue mediating around that concept; for example, by bridging cultural issues such as how it is less common to live in a house than in a flat in both urban and village settings in Spain. How much and how well each opportunity is taken to mediate depends on many factors, including the teacher, but also on student contributions. Multilingual and multicultural classes might compare and contrast knowledge and attitudes with their home countries. Similar topics such as university fees, scholarships or state funding could be part of this mediation between the active agents in the classroom: teachers and students.

There is a need for greater research exploring how language teachers help learners understand the cultural resonance of linguistic meanings within and beyond cultural boundaries. As Kohler (2015, p. 3) has suggested, more should be investigated about "the nature of intercultural language teaching and learning itself, and specifically the act of mediation". In other words, we do not know enough about how language teachers actually construct opportunities for their learners to make connections between languages and cultures and how they draw upon their own stock of knowledge and experience to mediate for learners and help learners mediate for themselves. There has been a clear call for research on mediation during the last few years. Kramsch (2011) has pointed out how useful it would be to investigate what, if any, attention is given to the concept of mediation and the mediatory role, and four years later Stathopoulou (2015, p. 214) recommended the investigation of "naturally occurring instances of mediation and the use of mediation strategies in language education contexts beyond testing". Those naturally occurring instances of mediation are precisely the most significant and central part of this study, which captures and analyses them.

Consequently, this study intends to make a particular contribution to understanding the processes of teachers' mediation within the specific field of Spanish as a foreign language. Whereas pedagogical research has traditionally focused on English language teaching (ELT), this study examines teaching practices in Spanish as a foreign language (FL) at English universities, thus responding to the call for in-depth research of a relatively unexplored area in the field of mediation.



### 1.3. Research aims

The aim of this study is to explore how HE Spanish language teachers mediate between diverse languages and cultures in the classroom, taking into account specific strategies used by language teachers to achieve mediation and how two different teaching modes (online and face-to-face) can facilitate this process. The study analyses how teachers work in classrooms with the linguistic and cultural meanings that underlie language use in the current intercultural language education paradigm. The mediation practices put in place to bring together the native and target culture(s) alongside the linguistic competencies of grammar, syntax and lexis necessary to communicate in a new language are observed and analysed.

This research draws on sociocultural theory (SCT) as a lens for examining how the mediation work of the teacher shapes how students engage with intercultural dimensions of language learning. Primary data from classroom observations (Richards, 2012), stimulated recall (SR) interviews (Gass and Mackey, 2016) and a final interview were collected. Teachers' mediation opportunities observed from their interactions with learners' and teachers' perceptions of those practices will be identified using an inductive approach to the analysed qualitative data. New knowledge emerging from this study will show the interrelationship between language teachers' identities as linguistic and **intercultural mediators and their own classroom practices. By linguistic and intercultural mediator, the teacher explores different dimensions of the target culture and that of students and negotiates cultural and linguistic boundaries. Co-constructing linguistic and intercultural movements when bridging together different worlds, will identify the concrete nature of mediation practices and the role of teachers as mediators in online and face-to-face FL classrooms in HE.**

### 1.4. Thesis structure

**Chapter 1** has presented an introduction to this thesis, explaining the background of mediation from a professional and personal perspective, the research context in the HE sector and the thesis structure. Mediation in language teaching has not been researched from a teacher's point of view as much as it has been studied as a skill to be achieved by students. As a consequence, the intricacies and elaboration of how Spanish teachers use mediational strategies during class in HE remains to be studied. Finding answers to how these teachers mediate in the online and face-to-face classroom is the aim of this thesis.

**Chapter 2** reviews research on linguistic and cultural mediation, focusing on the study of FL education and the role mediation plays in teachers' actions in the classroom. From the Vygotskian concept of mediation within cognitive development theory, through what this



term has represented in intercultural language education, this literature review narrows down the definition of mediation for Spanish language teachers at universities in the UK. This chapter also provides a critical review of current FL teachers as mediators, providing a rationale for the questions addressed by this research.

Empirical evidence gathering strategies of teachers' mediation in the Spanish classroom was needed. Thus, **chapter 3** includes the main research question of how Spanish language teachers mediate between diverse languages and cultures in the HE classrooms. The philosophical and methodological foundations adopted in this research include a qualitative constructivist focus. Four native speaker participants were recruited through purposeful sampling that encompassed two face-to-face and one online teaching institution. The data collection process includes four in-class recorded observations (2 hours each session), followed by matching stimulated recall interviews and a final interview for each participant. Classroom video observations, alongside in situ note taking, captured real examples of mediation instances taking a naturalistic line of enquiry. In the case of online teachers, classes were recorded by the teachers and did not include cameras, which means nonverbal data was not collected. Self-reflective work by participants during Stimulated Recall (SR) helps in understanding the reasons and thoughts behind the recorded mediation practices. Finally, four individual semi-structured interviews (one per teacher) assist in the triangulation of this study's data. Moving from participant-teachers' professional tools and actions in the classroom to their own self-perceptions, specific mediation practices were collected and thematically analysed using NVivo software. Following the description of methods and data analysis techniques, a discussion of the main ethical considerations is provided.

**Chapter 4, 5 and 6** discuss the main findings, divided into three different chapters of strategies: (4) linguistic strategies, (5) nonverbal strategies and (6) strategies related to personal experiences. Implications for teachers' practices in the classroom are found, and patterns followed during their mediations are revealed. The use of multiple mediations as a multilayered process, combining them while paying attention to students' feedback for possible re-mediations, is one of the findings about mediation processes from the teachers' side. A detailed analysis of how this mediation practices can be achieved in online and face-to-face teaching modes and answers to the research question and sub questions are presented.

**Chapter 7** concludes this thesis by presenting a concluding summary of findings, the contributions to this study deduced from the summary of answers given to the research question, limitations of the study, further research ideas and the practical implications the



study of mediation implies for language teachers' education. Acknowledging the power of teachers as mediators in the language classroom is a valuable contribution, as it informs the significance of mediation practices in creating effective learning opportunities in the field of Spanish language teaching.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This second chapter is organised as follows. Firstly, there is an exploration of different perspectives in language education according to Vygotsky (1978) and as applied in the current intercultural paradigm of foreign language teaching and learning. It also shows how eclectic definitions of mediation can be, and considers related concepts that are important in the configuration of mediation, such as scaffolding or zone of proximal development (ZPD). Once the concept of mediation examined in this work is identified, section 2.3 focuses on foreign language teachers as mediators, the plurilingualism found in current FL classrooms and the impact it has on mediation, the power of teacher talk for studying oral mediation in FL classrooms, and the characteristics of ongoing oral mediation. Finally, in section 2.4.1, diverse types of mediation in the literature are put into consideration – divided into those with a language focus and those with a culture focus – and specific mediation strategies are presented.

The concept of mediation has traditionally been of great significance in various disciplines such as social sciences, psychology and education. It is therefore polysemic, that is, it has a range of distinct meanings across the fields, although there are also similarities. Conflict resolution, neutral third party negotiation and joint advocacy are a summary of initial affordances of the concept of mediation carried out since the 1980s in the field of social sciences. These characteristics do not necessarily agree with mediation from the perspective of language education. Liddicoat (2022, p. 56) studied the multiple uses of this term and concluded that “the conflicts and tensions between ways of perceiving mediation are often productive for developing new and more cogent understandings”. An overview of the definitions of mediation and mediator in the field of language education is presented and critically discussed in the following section.

### **2.2. The concept of mediation in language education**

Different approaches to mediation have been found in the literature on language education, from behaviourist theories to a social and cognitive development perspective. The earliest reference found to mediation in relation to language education dates from the 1950s and it



finds its ground in behaviourist theories. Rivers (1964) studied how teachers of French (though her conclusions were extended to other foreign languages) helped students create meanings. She based her work on the Mediation Theory of Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957, p. 139). Rivers said that

the Mediating relation is that between the self-stimulation and the overt response, a relation composed of hierarchies of habits, their relative strengths depending on 'momentary contextual conditions and pervasive cultural factors'. At the sound of his own voice saying 'Bonjour, monsieur', the Frenchman automatically extends his hand.

The views of Rivers and Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum on linking the creation of meanings with a relevant mediating relation represent a theory of automatised behaviour when learning languages. FL students and teachers deal with unknown concepts in the new language that is to be discovered; such challenges can be considered the stimulus at which students will react as native or near-native speakers once they achieve an understanding of this concept. However, the reaction to new concepts is seen once teachers have been able to equip students with perceptive meaningful units to respond to make sense of new meanings in that foreign language. Rivers' focus on observational conduct and automatised reactions are not based on the sociocultural perspective that relies on intermediary tools for mediation.

A few years after Rivers, Feuerstein (1969, p. 6) expressed his views on mediation from a sociocultural cognitive development perspective, highlighting the interaction with a more knowledgeable self as an essential part in the process. He argued that "mediated learning is the training given to the human organism by an experienced adult who frames, selects, focuses and feeds back an environmental experience in such a way as to create appropriate learning sets". This view contends that for instance by interacting with an adult or a more expert person in the target area who guides problem-solving activities and structures the learning environment, the student gradually comes to adopt structuring and regulatory activities of their own. Following a similar line, Vygotsky (1978) investigated the concept of mediation based on SCT and cognitive principles; Wertsch (1985) and Lantolf (1994) and Lantolf and Thorne (2006) are among other researchers in language education who expanded his work. This thesis establishes mediation grounded on Vygotsky's influence; therefore, it is important to understand what this entails.

### *2.2.1. Vygotskian concept of mediation*

In the field of language acquisition, Vygotsky (1978) considered that mediation had a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Following Vygotsky's viewpoints,



mediation was seen as the process whereby artefacts are used to activate mental activity (Wertsch, 1985; Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf, 2006). Vygotsky's SCT of cognitive development set the basis for the concept of mediation as a key part of teaching and learning, which includes social interaction with other individuals who can contribute to increasing knowledge collaboratively through dialogue. Decades later, Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 79) continued to define mediation as a process "through which humans deploy culturally constructed artefacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e. gain voluntary control and transform) the material world of their own and each other's social and mental activity". Three concepts are involved in this process of mediation: learners' zones of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding and appropriation, which are reviewed in the following paragraphs.

The ZPD is defined as the distance between what a learner is capable of doing unsupported, and what they can do with support. This ZPD is seen as the point at which learning occurs (Gibbons, 2003) and the moment where mediation is more productive. Kozulin (2003) sees the ZPD as yet another process to generate psychological tools out of the transformation of physical and symbolic tools. As a result of progressing in this ZPD through mediation, intentional control over the cognitive function is gained. In parallel, the learner acquires an intentional relation to the world and others. The concept of the ZPD has been extensively used since Vygotsky. This overly used term was conceived for children's language acquisition although it has been applied to other stages of human mental development. Negueruela (2008) offered a revisited version of this process, called the zone of potential development (ZPOD), which is more in congruence with the context of this thesis since it points directly at adult learning of a second language. Negueruela (2008, p. 199) claims that "the notion of proximal may be misleading and it may lead to interpretations of the ZPOD based on either simple causality or a constructivist view of development where it is assumed that we eventually develop in a certain proximal way". He illustrates his case by saying that learners may receive help which would perhaps be adequate to fulfil the mission of solving the task, but it may not create authentic development as it does not necessarily promote new conceptual understanding. Through mediation, known and unknown concepts are brought into relationship, to allow comparisons, differences and similarities to flourish. However, it is not only the proximity but the potential of developing skills during this learning experience as a non-linear conceptual process which is important. By observing teaching and learning activity in mediation processes in the internalisation of new concepts by students, both the teacher and students situate themselves in a zone of proximal and potential development.



Scaffolding as an aspect of formal instruction (also called 'instructional scaffolding' by Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p. 507) is associated with the mediation task of guiding, supporting, providing assistance and gradual input to the learner. Therefore, teachers assist students to come closer to the unknown and critically reflect on the new or target language and culture. With their support, and not independently, learners are situated within their ZPD. Teachers' scaffolding helps mediation levels take place at the appropriate rhythm depending on the teacher and the learner. As Daniels, Cole and Wertsch (2007, p. 188) stated,

not only may it be possible, but it may be desirable for students to say and do things that seem to extend beyond their level of understanding. This is because such a possibility means they can enter into a basic form of intersubjectivity with more experienced teachers and experts and thereby leverage their way up through increasing levels of expertise.

Scaffolding implies social practices where knowledge and understanding is extended steadily with the help of experienced teachers or speakers. More recently, Cordella and Huang (2016, p. 223) underlined the importance of applying scaffolding from a Vygotskian perspective when teaching foreign languages. They claimed that "when native speakers are made aware of how to scaffold rather than dominate a conversation, they will generally help to maximise the chances for students to interact more competently". By applying such a tool, teachers are able to co-create new meanings in the classroom.

Sociocultural theory (SCT) focuses on human action and mediation. One of the tenets of SCT is that an individual's mental, social, and material activity is mediated by cultural tools and signs (Vygotsky, 1981). Such tools and signs should not only be understood and heard but, for learning to be effective, learners should feel as if they own them. As Vygotsky (1987) stated, when a child takes a tool and/or a concept and makes it his or her own, 'appropriation' is achieved when they use it in a new or unique way. The same steps are needed for an adult to internalise a new language and culture. With the help of a mediator to contextualise and activate these tools that allow making the new and the known cultures and languages closer, the learner (adult or child) will more effectively follow the steps to internalise new concepts. Following this understanding of language teaching and learning, it is important to consider that learning starts at the interpersonal level and then moves to the intrapersonal level, according to Vygotsky. Appropriation theory is therefore linked to internalisation processes, as the new set of cultural and linguistic rules needs to be internalised; in this way, the teacher will support the transformation of the learner's cognitive



structure. Dao and Iwashita (2018, p. 184) have indicated that “sociocultural theory specifically highlights co-construction of knowledge through collaboration and mutual assistance from all participants (teachers and learners), in enabling learners to achieve what they cannot attain individually”. Thus, this theory can help us study language teachers’ classroom mediation by paying attention to the role their discourses and actions play in interaction with students who may or may not prompt such mediation instances.

From the perspective of cognitive change, the mediator links not only the subject and the learner but their own cognitive aptitudes and steps during this process. As Buzan (1984) stated, a shift from a ‘sponge pedagogy’ into an ‘exploration and discovery pedagogy’ is needed. Sponge pedagogy is understood as learners absorbing knowledge not necessarily in an active way while teachers pour knowledge on them. Mediation as a tool to use in education plays an important role in a more active gaining of knowledge because it implies that learners and teachers have to reflect, co-construct and interpret such knowledge.

There have been different frameworks in language education. Following the audiolingual method, ‘sponge theory’ and communicative language teaching, it is the emergence of intercultural language education that has placed the notion of mediation between languages and cultures at its axis. Today’s language education is able to situate mediation as a goal to be achieved by learners and teachers as a result of reconceptualising older preconceptions and assuming a more connected view on the importance of mediating between languages and cultures. The following section focuses on how Vygotsky’s studies on mediation have been applied within the paradigm of intercultural language education in the 21st century.

### *2.2.2. Mediation in intercultural language education*

In the last few decades, intercultural competence has entered the language classroom. This has been described as the ability of a speaker to see relationships between different cultures to mediate either for themselves or other people (Byram, 2000); thus mediation has been given a key role in the intercultural dimension of language education. There is an extensive body of research on the meaning of intercultural competence and its pedagogical implications in language education. Intercultural competence relates to the “circulation of values and identities across cultures, the inversions, even inventions of meaning, often hidden behind a common illusion of effective communication” (Kramsch, Levy and Zarate, 2008, p. 15). However, despite agreement on integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in language classrooms, as Díaz (2013, p. xvi) put it, “practitioners continue to struggle to translate these models and teaching approaches into actual



classroom practice". It is through mediating new cultures and languages that teachers can help students become intercultural speakers in this global world; therefore, empirical research about the use of mediation in this context during FL classes is needed. As Stathopoulou (2015) pointed out, the mediation necessary to function in today's multilingual societies is overlooked in the FL classroom. Translating theory into practice for mediation teaching in FL education is an important aspect of this thesis.

Language teachers need to reflect on their capacity to mediate and be aware of their potential by thinking critically about their mediational actions. This is why interculturality can play an important role in mediating languages, as it involves attitudes of openness and curiosity as well as a critical awareness of different value systems (Byram, 1997). Teachers as mediators find themselves in between two or more worlds, which inevitably consist of different languages and cultures. The pedagogical shift toward the integration of interculturality within language teaching has been researched by numerous scholars (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001; Sercu, 2005; Liddicoat, 2013; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013). However, there is limited understanding of how teachers are trained to introduce intercultural teaching for foreign languages (Sercu, 2005), how teachers and learners interact, and how their discourse reveals their shared position as mediators (Byram and Feng, 2004). A deeper understanding of this issue could be developed by studying the dialogue that forms mediation in the classroom and training teachers with the findings of such processes. This paucity in the current situation of intercultural education in FL could be improved by "a facilitator intervening in the transmission of cultural information, an interpreter of cultures, an agent mediating intercultural communication" (Gohard-Radenkovic et al., 2004, p. 219). This facilitator is also known as a mediator, interpreting not only cultures but languages, which is the role undertaken by the Spanish language teachers in this thesis.

More recently, Iglesias Casal and Ramos Méndez (2020) reinforced the relevance of mediation within intercultural communication when they claimed mediation is the cornerstone of this paradigm in language education, understanding mediation as a process in which the agents involved negotiate and build meanings while interacting in mediatory spaces.

The term 'mediation' embodies various theoretical concepts presented in this first part of the literature review and a short synthesis of how they relate to each other is offered in the following paragraphs. Regarding theories behind the term mediation in terms of activating knowledge, two different initial strands emerged which did not agree with each other. On



one hand early behaviourist theories (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1957 and Rivers, 1964) believed learning languages through mediation was an automatised behaviour, and the mediating relation teachers created to link new meanings was considered a stimulus to react.

However, this view was later challenged from a sociocultural perspective (Feuerstein, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978; Werstch, 1985; Lantolf, 1994, 2006) that agreed on the power of intermediary tools and social interaction handled by a more expert self. Cognitive development through the use of mediation in language education was therefore activated. It is through this last theory of SCT that notions such as ZPD, scaffolding and appropriation were developed and discussed among researchers. A relevant point of disagreement occurred with the use of ZPD for adults (Negueruela, 2008) who believed development in proximal ways should not be taken for granted and swapped 'proximal' for 'potential', as opposed to most theorist using the original ZPD (Kozulin, 2003 and Gibbons, 2003). Finally, as Buzan (1984) observed, a move from a sponge theory of language learning to an explorative vision where learners and teachers interact and bear in mind linguistic and cultural aspects was adopted. Although differences and struggles when putting ICC into practice exist (Diaz, 2013; Iglesias Casal and Ramón Mendez, 2020) there appears to be some agreement (Byram, 2000; Sercu, 2005; Stathopoulou, 2015) in using intercultural language education as the current paradigm for language education.

This section has highlighted the evolution of mediation in the field of language education, focusing on interculturality; however, it is the concrete perspective of language teaching as mediation where this work's foreground is set. Therefore, the following section deals with more specific research in mediation within foreign language teaching and learning.

### *2.2.3. Mediation in foreign language teaching and learning*

The term used in this work to refer to a new and unknown language taught through language education, one that is not taught as a native language (with its associated literature), will be 'foreign language' (FL). Despite some critique of the word 'foreign' for being related to concepts like borders and 'them' vs. 'us' (Kohl, 2018; Polisca, E. et al., 2019), it is a widely used term and it has been chosen for its clarity regarding the study of the language of another country. 'Modern foreign language' (MFL) is an alternative term, although primarily used in secondary education, originally to distinguish the teaching of such a language from the classical ones, such as Latin or Greek. Most researchers engaged in mediation within this discipline (Kohler, 2015, 2020; Stathopoulou, 2013, 2015; Herazo Rivera and Sagre



Barboza, 2016; Kramsch, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2018; and Byram, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004) use 'foreign language', which agrees with this thesis's choice.

Some studies have identified mediation with an action and defined it as an act or activity. Rössler (2009) who studied the language mediation of English language learners in Germany, described it as a complex activity involving at least two languages. Dendrinos (2013), a few years later, researched language mediation for Greek students of English, and she defined it as the act of extracting meaning from one language and relaying it into another. This idea of extracting and relaying seems to focus on mediation as translation and it does not take into account the interpretation and negotiation of meanings. As Kohler (2015, p. 5) explained, "the notion of mediation moves beyond a process of transferring meaning in communication or scaffolding knowledge for learning". The choice of words used to describe a concept are important as they underline the approach behind that belief. For that reason, and despite being a term supported by researchers of mediation from a student point of view instead of the teacher, this work agrees with the active function involved in the term activity or act in mediation for teachers too.

Mediation encompasses the acts of creation and negotiation of meanings through the interpretation of new and known concepts. Teachers as mediators help students interpret new meanings, an idea that "moves away from the idea of problem-solving to emphasise more the role of interpretation" (Liddicoat, 2014, p.261). Stressing teachers' responsibility in going beyond a transfer of information and the facilitation of interpretation was also supported by Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 296), who stated that interpretation is "the act of rendering oral language that is spoken in one language (source language) into another language (target language) for the benefit of listeners who do not understand (or who understand imperfectly) the source language". During the process of interpretation as mediation, critical sense-making of the world is developed through the sharing of different understandings.

Kohler (2015) explained that when students interact with new worlds mediated through teachers' actions, it is not only their knowledge that changes but also their own sense of self and identity in the world, and this thesis is positioned within the same stance. During this process, a "macro transformational process" as Kohler (2015, p. 144) named it, it is often necessary for the teacher in the classroom to make references to the learner's own language(s) and culture(s). These references can happen either by proximity with the new language and culture to be learnt (in which case the effectiveness of culture and language assimilation can be very compelling due to similarities), or by distance from it (which will help the teacher make the contrasts, differences and oppositions evident), to understand



critically while learning more in depth about the existing languages and cultures in each student's repertoire.

Two more ideas have evolved around the concept of mediation in FL teaching and language, considering it as a bridge and as a journey. The negotiation of a new concept, term or idea in a foreign language classroom requires the management of students' previous knowledge of this new language and its related cultures. On one side of the bridge could be students' knowledge and on the other side the target concept accompanied by teachers' knowledge and experiences. Language teachers' mediating role is about how they can, as Gibbons (2003, p. 257) put it, build "linguistic bridges to overcome difficulties, differences, or distance". However, it is worth noting that mediation bridges go beyond linguistic terms in this thesis, as cultural bridges are also perceived by the teacher and learners when learning new concepts in a foreign language. These bridges are vital in the learning and teaching process; however, it is imperative to be able to identify the ways in which they are constructed in the classroom. What is significant about tying together linguistic and cultural bridges in a foreign language classroom is the unique experience delivered by each agent in the classroom: teacher and students. As Byram (1997) pointed out, our social identity is unavoidably part of social interaction. The teacher facilitates learning and assimilation through mediation precisely because it is an interpersonal social process. We can say it is interpersonal because it takes into account past experiences (of both teachers and students) in order to set a specific context where a new idea can be settled in sharing space within the familiar one. It has been suggested that "the process of mediation begins from the learner's own perception of cultural difference across languages and becomes more sophisticated as they attempt to interpret that difference" (McConachy and Liddicoat, 2016, p. 39). To what extent teachers also initiate mediation when they perceive a difference and how this process starts to develop as they engage into mediating is yet to be analysed with classroom evidence.

It also seems reasonable to consider mediation as being a journey where one travels from one place to another. Mediation can be seen as a journey when teachers help students travelling from the known into the unknown, or vice versa, guiding them as someone with knowledge and experience on the terrain. This concept of journey is used, for example, by Ilieva (2002) when she says intercultural experiences are a journey in 'in-betweenness'. Not only intercultural but intracultural, intralingual and interlingual experiences could be added for a more complete description of the mediation journey. Such practices can take place in the foreign language classroom, as the language educator attempts to mediate between different unknown cultural and linguistic concepts.



Mediation in FL teaching has been understood as a tool or skill by different researchers. According to Chini (2001), mediation is especially complicated for foreign languages when it is not only a learning object but a vehicle or conveyor of content, a professional or technical development tool. When mediating languages in the FL classroom, the specific moves chosen to do so may be done in the target language too, so it will not only be the tool but also carry new meanings within it. Gohard-Radenkovic et al. (2004) did not use terms such as tools or vehicle but they described mediation as a skill. The problematic with defining mediation as a skill lies in the measuring of the level achieved when acquiring a new skill.

Finally, it is worth considering mediation as a process, one that encompasses tools, skills, actions and activities. Coste and Cavalli (2015) studied mediation for language policies and they argued that mediation is “any procedure, arrangement or action designed in each social context to reduce the distance between two (or more) poles of otherness between which there is tension” (Coste and Cavalli, 2015, p.17). While this work agrees with the description of mediation as action, the word ‘tension’ can be seen as a negative term, inherited from the concept of mediation in social sciences where it is seen as a conflict resolution skill. More recently, associating interpretation with the complex process of mediation in a conscious manner, was McConachy’s (2018, p. 41) take on describing this phenomenon. He affirmed that

mediation is the attempt to consciously bring languages and cultures in relation to each other in the act of interpretation, and the meta-pragmatic awareness that develops from such a process encompasses elements of foreign cultural frames of understanding and also elements of one’s own interpretative architecture.

More recently, in 2018, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has given special attention to mediation, since North developed it in 2007 and subsequently in 2020 when he completed a very thorough work creating descriptors for each category of mediation in the learning of foreign languages in the Companion Volume (North, Brian and Piccardo, Enrica, 2020). However, mediation is not understood as a teaching activity nor does it assess teaching but learning instead. As a consequence, mediation facilitated by teachers is barely addressed in this document. CEFR understands that teachers and students will be mediating concepts and ideas on every skill exercised, but mediation in this thesis it is presented not only in processing skills but also as part of interaction and reception skills.



The Companion Volume (CV) was intended to examine learners' level of acquisition in new languages and its vision on mediation is about what language learners can do to resolve the communication problems of other people, which does not reflect teaching. Nevertheless, despite not being related to mediation as it is understood in this study from a teaching perspective, this timely update on the CEFR by the Council of Europe (CoE) gives mediation as a communicative skill to be practised by learners the attention it needs in current language education policies.

Trovato (2020, p. 3) took an approach to mediation from a translation perspective sharing the focus on learners' mediation followed in the CV, based on verbal communication when he describes linguistic mediation as "an operation or a series of operations that, throughout linguistic elements, makes verbal communication possible".

This work centres on mediation during FL classes, and oral mediation is the principal form used in this environment, especially by teachers. An original definition of the key term mediation is produced following this critical discussion on the different perspectives that researchers have taken in the literature. The following section summarises the descriptions and provides with a clarification of what mediation entails in this specific study.

#### 2.2.4. Definitions of the term 'mediation' in the literature

Based on the notions described above, diverse definitions of mediation by some of the main authors dealing with the concept in the field of foreign language education during the 21st century have been selected. The table presented below exposes variations in the definitions of the term mediation as a technique, action, skill, process or tool, depending on the approach and the author defining it. This overview shows different currents in the discussion on mediation, and it will help creating a definition for mediation in this study.

*Table 1. Definitions of the term 'mediation' in foreign language education*

SCHOLAR	DEFINITION OF MEDIATION
Chini, D (2001)	Mediation is especially complicated for foreign languages when it is not only a learning object but a <b>vehicle</b> or <b>conveyor</b> of content, a professional or technical development <b>tool</b> .
Zarate et al. (2004)	Mediation is more than a <b>skill</b> and greater attention needs to be paid to the affective dimension of mediation including the role of attitudes and dispositions such as empathy and the role of identity.



Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 79)	Mediation is the <b>process</b> through which humans deploy culturally constructed artefacts, concepts and activities to regulate (i.e., gain voluntary control and transform) the material world of their own and each other's social and mental activity.
Rössler (2009, p. 160)	"Mediation is a complex <b>activity</b> , interactive on some occasions, which is carried out in communicative situations where at least two languages are involved. You must master and put into practice not only communicative strategies but also productive ones in order to perform it." (translated from German)
Dendrinos (2013)	"Mediation is the <b>act</b> of extracting meaning from visual or verbal texts in one language, code, dialect or idiom and relaying it in another, so as to facilitate communication."
Kohler (2015, p.144)	"Mediation can be understood as a macro transformational <b>process</b> in which not only is an individual's knowledge changed through learning a new linguistic and cultural frame of reference but his/her sense of self and identity in the world is also changes, as he/she learns new ways of being themselves within and expanded linguistic and cultural universe".
Coste and Cavalli (2015, p. 17)	"Any <b>procedure, arrangement or action</b> designed in each social context to reduce the distance between two (or more) poles of otherness between which there is tension."
North and Piccardo (2020, p.90)	"The user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes across modalities (e.g. from spoken to signed or vice versa, in cross-modal communication) and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The focus is on the role of language in <b>processes</b> like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form."



McConachy (2018, p. 41)	“Mediation is the attempt to consciously bring languages and cultures in relation to each other in the act of interpretation, and the meta-pragmatic awareness that develops from such a <b>process</b> encompasses elements of foreign cultural frames of understanding and also elements of one’s own interpretative architecture. In this sense, the ability to effectively mediate depends on the learner’s capacity for bringing implicit knowledge and assumptions into awareness through reflection. This is a challenge given that the specific architecture of knowledge and assumptions which underlies pragmatic interpretation is tied up with individual’s entire worldview.”
Trovato (2020)	Linguistic mediation is an <b>operation</b> or a series of operations that, through linguistic elements, makes verbal communication possible and it allows the connection of two or more people that would not manage to interact otherwise. (translated from Spanish)

An initial generally accepted definition of mediation focused on the activity of ‘conflict resolution’, which some language education theorist agreed to some extent when connecting ideas of mediation as a process to resolving tensions (Coste and Cavalli, 2015). However, solving problems as the main objective for mediation from a FL teacher’s perspective in the classroom can be limited, and other researchers moved beyond those tensions and associated mediation with the notions of ‘interpretation and negotiation’ (Liddicoat, 2014 and Kohler, 2015). It is this same idea of interacting with new meanings, which implies a higher level of collaboration through intermediary tools and a more expert learner that is supported in this thesis. Rossler (2009) and Dendrinos (2013) agree with researchers using the term activity, nevertheless instead of defining mediation as the act of conflict resolution, they offer a definition of seeing mediation as the act of ‘extracting meaning from one language and relying it in another’ (Dendrinos, 2013, para.1). Despite considering those acts important for mediation, such approach does not either completely cover the extent of this phenomenon when studying mediation in this study. Further concepts such as ‘bridge’ and ‘journey’, subscribe to an idea of seeing mediation as an active process such as a travel with different stages to manage going from one place to another. Some theorists using both terms ‘journey’ and ‘bridge’ have concentrated their research either on the linguistic side of mediation (Gibbons, 2003) or the cultural aspect of it (McConachy and Liddicoat, 2016) as a bridge. However, the research conducted for this thesis understands mediation is not only an intercultural journey (Ilieva, 2002) but also as intracultural, interlingual and intralingual.



Therefore, after critically evaluating the literature, the definition of mediation carried out by language teachers in the classroom that has been built for this thesis follows the idea of mediation as a process or procedure since it indicates a complex action that entails different parts. Mediation is viewed here as the main action – rather than a tool, skill or activity – that teachers can perform in the classroom to encourage students to make connections between languages and cultures. This perspective can be criticised as considering all knowledge acquired and taught in the classroom as mediation, which makes it difficult to put limits on what is considered mediation. However, instances of mediation are identified when a new meaning is being bridged to students through different strategies that aim at bridging the known with the unknown.

The definition of mediation given here takes account of teachers' personal linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which makes an impact on how mediation is developed. Foreign language teachers are in a position to mediate and act toward students' learning process. Therefore, the following section examines who FL teachers, the main actors in this thesis, are as mediators in the classroom.

### **2.3. Teachers as mediators in the FL classroom**

The type of mediation analysed in depth in this thesis has been specified as the one carried out by teachers in the foreign language classroom. Tella (1996, p. 13) called on teachers to "be courageous enough to step aside from the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side' not to impose or simply transmit new knowledge but to encourage students to critically compare and analyse this new language to be acquired". This statement suggests that mediation is inherently student-centred, which matches the majority of the literature on this topic. It seems interesting to study whether that is reflected in classroom practice. By being courageous, as Tella said, a movement to connect language and cultures could be inferred by the teacher too. In that case, the teacher might be the initiator of a mediation and not simply a guide who accompanies students on their mediations. Understanding the relationships between teachers' actions when mediating for students in the classroom is a key aspect to clarify this process.

As we saw above in the discussion of mediation from a sociocultural perspective, a mediator is identified as an intermediary who uses his/her competence to mediate meanings from one language and culture to another (Buttjes and Byram, 1991; Byram and Grundy, 2003; Byram, 2002). In this study, the term 'mediator' is used specifically to refer to the person in the classroom who bridges concepts from the TL and culture to the known language(s) and culture(s) or vice versa while using other languages and cultures which are present in the classroom and all strategies available in such context. This person can be the teacher



or/and the student, mediating for self or others, as explained in the previous section with relation to the ZPOD. Nonetheless, in this thesis, the focus is on the teacher and how they use those unifying threads to build a more effective mediation with students. FL teachers as mediators are those 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1985) who develop a critical stance toward their own teaching practices and engage critically with different cultural and linguistic realities to bring them closer to students.

Teachers as mediators have been the focus of recent research completed in China (Cheng, 2012), Australia (Kohler, 2015), Spain (Martínez-Álvarez, Cuevas and Torres-Guzmán, 2017; Fernández Álvarez and García Hernández, 2021), France (Gibbons, 2003), Greece (Stathopoulou 2015), Israel (Schwartz and Gorbatt, 2017), Colombia (Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016), Brazil (Chesini, Crestani and de Souza, 2013), Indonesia (Nurhasanah, 2014) and Canada (Dao and Iwashita, 2018; Keating Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng, 2018) – see Appendix 1 for a visual representation of the different geographical contexts of this research to date, where it can be seen that the United Kingdom is not an active part of this research, perhaps as a consequence of not being so influenced by education trends in the EU. These studies report mediation actions by teachers across the world, although with the exception of Kohler (2015), none of them are focused on teachers' thoughts when mediating, examining the subject's reflections and opinions when he or she is bridging the gaps and negotiating in this process. This thesis seeks to give an account of the choices teachers make in the classroom, bringing attention to links with their personal or professional experiences when they mediate and their reflections on those actions considering the need to know more about teachers' roles as mediators. The geographical location of the existing studies is only one factor to bear in mind when analysing the previous work, as a study carried out in Spain does not mean Spanish teachers were the focus of the investigation. In fact, the majority of these studies have analysed the role of English teachers as mediators, except for Kohler (2015), who focused on Indonesian, Schwartz and Gorbatt (2017), who observed Hebrew and Arabic, and Homs Vilá (2014), looking at Spanish in Germany.

With regard to the teaching contexts where foreign language teachers have been studied as mediators in the literature, it is evident that primary education (Schwartz and Gorbatt, 2017; Gibbons, 2003; Nurhasanah, 2014) and secondary education (Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016; Kohler, 2015; Keating Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng, 2018) are better represented in the literature, whereas mediation in foreign language classrooms at the HE level has not been deeply investigated, except in Dao and Iwashita's (2018) recent work that studies language mediation for English learners. My great interest in HE Spanish teachers comes from the outsider-insider position of the research, being an insider as a



Spanish language teacher in HE and an outsider as a researcher in this work. Such a dichotomy is, of course, natural not only for teachers and researchers who balance both identities but also an intrinsic characteristic in foreign language learners and teachers. Kramsch (2011, p. 355) asked: “How can one mediate, that is, interpret one’s own and the other’s culture each in terms of the other, if at the same time one’s interpretation is culturally determined? Where, then, is mediation located?”. An attempt at answering this question could be locating mediating in the threads created between both languages and cultures and in one’s reflective views as an insider and a simultaneous outsider for both sides.

The idea of the mediator as a third party has also been used in language education as teachers decentre themselves from the target language and culture to see cultural phenomena from both an external and internal perspective (Liddicoat, 2014). However, it could be argued that language teachers are not completely neutral in their teaching, as their own identity and linguistic and cultural experiences are at the forefront of their work. These external/internal and insider/outsider perspectives show potential for mapping their mediation performances in different and personal ways, as well as creating the foundation for reflective practices.

Research has indicated that those FL teachers who have lived certain transnational experiences possess the most influential practice in their learners’ education: “the profession needs to put more value on the pedagogical resources that transnational and intercultural teachers bring to foreign language teaching rather than the original dichotomy between native and non-native speaking teachers” (Menard-Warwick, 2009, p.617). It is very complex to divide current FL practitioners into native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs), when some of them have either lived in more than two countries or speak more than two languages; for this reason, the term ‘transnational teachers’ encompasses the reality much better in those cases. A teacher who uses and lives both cultures at the same time – such as a Spanish teacher who lived in Spain for the first half of their life and in the United Kingdom for the second half, but teaches Spanish language and culture every day in class – could be called ‘bicultural/bilingual’ or ‘transnational/translingual’. ‘Bicultural’ would be an appropriate term for a FL teacher with two languages and cultures, but ‘transnational’ fully covers those teachers who have cross-linguistic and cross-cultural experiences. Although FL teachers “may see themselves, and be seen, as interculturally competent simply as a result of their teaching practice” (Lallana and Salamanca, 2020, p. 180), some are those transcultural and translingual experts just mentioned, but others have never experienced the target culture(s) and language(s) first-hand. The next section considers the information about current FL teachers in the UK, who act as mediators in the classroom.



### 2.3.1. *Plurilingualism in the classroom*

The context of this study is that of HE Spanish language classrooms in the UK, where traditionally different nationalities are brought together and teachers are commonly not British-born practitioners. The use in the FL classroom of teachers' and students' first language or native language (L1) and the use of the second language (L2) or target language (TL) has been the centre of discussions regarding teaching performance in FL education. It has been claimed (Ellis, 2005; Krashen, 1988) that any time L1 is being used, an L2 learning opportunity is lost. However, L1 can help FL teachers make connections between first culture (C1) and target culture (TC) in the classroom. "Flexible languaging is an entirely normal and productive way of communicating" (Crump, 2013, p. 65) in the modern HE FL classroom, where code-switching between English or other languages and the TL occur. Of note, FL classrooms in English universities contain students from a wide diversity of nationalities, therefore it seems ambitious to imagine the same L1 for all the students and it can also be the case that students and teachers do not have just one L1 but rather are bilingual. This scenario presents a potential flexible languaging experience where the use of different languages and cultures is encouraged to make connections, comparisons and critical thinking about the TL and the rest of the languages present in the classroom. By activating plurilingualism in the FL classroom, teachers move beyond a multilingual vision of simply recognizing the presence of different languages in a space. As North and Panthier (2016, p.16) argue, "plurilingualism is the ability to use functionally more than one language- and accordingly sees languages from the standpoint of speakers and learners". It would be interesting to observe whether this is an aspect FL teachers factor in when mediating in the classroom.

Using different languages presented in the classroom functionally has been defined with concepts such as "code alternation" (Piccardo and North, 2020, p.285) and more recently named 'translanguaging' (Garcia, 2007; Creese and Blakledge, 2010; Stathopoulou, 2015 and Dendrinos, 2018). Stathopoulou (2015, p. 220) claimed that "translanguaging and mediation strategies should be a crucial component of any FL programme that aims at highlighting the links or dynamic relationships existing between languages". Therefore, teachers should foster multilingual practices in the classroom to leverage mediation across languages and cultures, as the operation is taking place in a plurilingual context.

### 2.3.2. *Foreign language teacher talk in the classroom*

Understanding how mediation is achieved requires close attention to what goes on in the classroom, specifically how language teachers talk about language in relation to culture and, importantly, how they co-construct perspectives on language and culture in tandem with students. Given that "the role of the teacher is not politically neutral, but indeed is a



platform for a view of the world and individuals in the world” (Buttjes and Byram, 1991, p. 77), each teacher will probably have a different style, share more or less from their own experience and follow a different array of strategies through their discourse in the classroom.

It is through teacher talk that those new ideas and concepts are introduced and mediated for meaning-making processes. Consequently, one of the main benefits of teacher talk is to facilitate the learning process and to direct mediation in the classroom. Stathopoulou (2015) established the need for future research on oral mediation performance. She claimed that discovering what successful oral mediation entails would require a more thorough investigation than had so far been done. However, her research interests revolve around students’ mediation, and the need to investigate oral practices involved in mediating from the teacher’s point of view is greater. Oral mediation, derived from spoken meaning-making processes which are generally spontaneous and very much context-dependent, is probably the most common type of mediation delivered by teachers in FL classes. Examining that sort of mediation is one of the principal aims of this thesis, where mediation through teacher talk is explored. Sanchez Castro (2013) stated that oral mediation should require a higher degree of intercultural demand than written mediation because teachers and students need to decide in a limited time what aspects should be mediated and explained, and how, during oral mediation. As McConachy (2018, p. 166) pointed out,

teacher experience talk, as constructed within classroom interactions, signals to students that the articulation of personal experience and one’s interpretations of experience are a resource for learning itself rather than simply a collection of things that have occurred in the past.

Due to the characteristics of this type of mediation, first-hand and observational data from teachers is needed.

### *2.3.3. Ongoing oral mediation during online and face-to-face FL classrooms*

Oral mediation, understood as a process to create new meanings connecting the known to the unknown in teachers’ practices, remains to be studied in depth, in face-to-face but even more in online oral instances. The distinction between teaching a class in an online mode or face-to-face has not been considered in the mediation literature, although it would seem an important contrast. Chini (2001) brings out some reflective questions about educational or pedagogical mediation and the different roles played by an on-site teacher or a computer which can be extrapolated to the distinction between mediation in online and face-to-face language education. Traditionally, the face-to-face mode of teaching has dominated formal education in higher education. Nevertheless, some institutions have instituted distance



learning, offering some courses or entire programmes through this alternative mode. Due to the possibilities provided by emergent technologies and with the ambition of overcoming traditional education by adapting to new learners, online education has been developed successfully at the university level. A deeper understanding of mediation practices in online environments when teaching languages is needed. Selecting teachers who work in an online mode in the present study will provide empirical evidence on how education using technology-supported tools can enable teachers to perform mediation in other ways. For these reasons – the lack of research and relevance in the current society – it seems important to consider oral mediation in both teaching modes in this study.

It is important to note that mediation has been investigated depending on when it is performed, whether that is before, during or after class. It is possible that FL teachers foresee points of conflict where mediation may be needed when planning their lessons, and so this seems worthy to be included in this investigation. Some evidence of research on mediation happening before class are collected by Chini (2001) followed Viselthier's (1998) concept of didactic or pedagogical agreement for those reflective episodes about the language and interior discourses happening prior to a mediation. Both students and teachers may experience mediative thoughts when a new concept is emerging, as preparation for the mediation process to acquire new knowledge. Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza (2016) called this 'proactive mediation' and studied it from the point of view of learners' participation and their efforts to interact, which is not the focus of this thesis, which concentrates on teachers' actions to mediate during the classroom. However, the work in this thesis revolves around mediation processes in the classroom. Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza (2016) named this moment of mediation 'ongoing mediation', or 'procedural assistance' and they studied it for learners' participation in the classroom, arguing that it occurs when students are attempting to formulate the TL. They included "discourse moves that occurred midway between learners' attempts to formulate an utterance" (Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016, p. 153). Ongoing oral mediation during class performed by teachers when they attempt at bridging TL unknown with known is the scope covered in this study, not only learners mediating moves. Considering the teacher during mediation opportunities in class, Chini (2001) following Viselthier's ideas (1998, p. 138, translated from French), talks about the "conceptual domain of knowledge to teach" and considers that it covers the "teacher's cognitive domain, student's cognitive domain, linguistic discourse and pedagogy". The principal moment in focus in this study is the moment in which teachers proceed with mediation strategies to bridge different new concepts in the target language and culture in the classroom.



## 2.4. Approaches to mediation in the FL classroom

It seems crucial to know how mediation is achieved to be able to recognise it, observe it and study its process. Researchers have suggested different approaches to how mediation can be achieved. Specific strategies that have been researched are included in this section as the literary support for the subsequent fieldwork in this thesis. As Kohler (2020, p. 15) argued, “for knowledge to develop, there must be an action of some kind that requires mediation”, and it is that action that FL teachers practise as mediators in the classroom. Such actions can be categorised as strategies. Consequently, the focus of this section will be on what actions teachers can make use of when achieving mediation for their students and the different types of mediations that will frame the strategies followed by teachers as mediators.

### 2.4.1. Types of mediations

It is essential to know about different possible types of mediations that can occur in the FL classroom before beginning observations in the present study. Some researchers (Herazo and Donato, 2012; Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016;) have analysed mediation types depending on whether they are focused on language, meaning and affect. For a more comprehensive distinction that may be helpful when analysing data, including meaning in both language and culture-focused mediations and not as a different category, they can be grouped into language, culture and affect-related mediations. The first two emerge from a cognitive perspective on mediation, considering it as a process of facilitating access to knowledge and concepts, particularly when an individual may be unable to access them directly on their own (Coste and Cavalli, 2015). The last one is responsible for maintaining a fruitful communicative teaching and learning environment in the classroom to maximise the opportunities for successful mediations, which is not within this thesis's scope.

In the foreign language classroom, teachers usually juggle and balance two elements, language and culture, to allow successful learning achievable through such mediations. In this section, types of mediation are differentiated depending on whether they have a language focus or a culture focus. In addition, ways of categorising mediation based on the agent who mediates, the intention of the mediation and the level of students' collaboration are also covered.

Regarding who acts as a mediator, Chini (2001, p. 33) identifies two different mediation processes: internal and external. Internal mediation can be found in both learners and teachers, and “is connected to the interior language which is an interior voice. The interior discourse opens the access to their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)”; this type of mediation is not facilitated by a more expert person, it is rather developed from inner



thoughts. On the other hand, FL teachers facilitate the understanding of new concepts to learners, and this is external mediation. External mediation can also happen among students when a more experienced learner mediates concepts with a more novice learner. Teachers' external and internal mediations will be gathered in this work.

Vygotsky (1981) identified two types of mediation depending on intention: implicit and explicit mediation. By 'implicit' he means the discourse produced by a teacher whenever she or he interacts in the classroom, including unconscious or unintentional explanations. It has been argued that mediation is probably one of the most common activities developed in the FL classroom (Kohler, 2015), to the extent that implicit mediation could occur in any teacher-student, student-teacher or student-student interaction. In contrast, by 'explicit mediation', Vygotsky means any explanation introduced by the teacher in an obvious manner, such as a grammar lesson or an answer to a question without going further towards the understanding with background explanations. This study will focus on how implicit mediation by FL teachers can engage reflection in learners and achieve the interpretation of new meanings.

Despite centring attention on the teacher's performance in mediation instances, it is vital to observe the interactions of students, since this is a social process where both agents are involved in the classroom. Dao and Iwashita (2018) studied language mediation performed by English teachers for Chinese learners in Canada. They focused on teachers' mediation when assisting learners' appropriation of language forms and their results indicate two levels of mediation: low and highly collaborative. A high collaboration from learners in mediation seemed to offer more opportunities to appropriate lexical mediation and guided teachers to adjust it. This study will observe the level of collaboration as a feature of teacher mediation, not only in relation to language but also culture, to examine whether these two levels are also present here and corroborate their impact in the process.

Language-related mediation, in the context of intercultural FL education where language is considered a social practice that goes beyond (but also includes) grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary, has been studied and different types identified. Traditionally, language has been associated with repetitive teaching drills, modelling learning and a structural system. However, this "presents a static and autonomous, decontextualised view of language, which results in notions of a prescribed linguistic standard independent of social variation" (Keating Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng, 2018, p. 295). Understandings of language should include an awareness of development within languages, and how they change depending on the users, which is what makes it a social practice. As Liddicoat (2014, p. 262) noted, "language itself can be a constituent part of what is mediated rather than just a vehicle



through which mediation occurs". When teachers mediate language concepts, it could be said that language is the focus of the mediation and not only the strategy for mediating new meanings.

Language-related mediation deals with language difficulties identified in the classroom by teachers or students "that lead to teacher mediation and interpretation practices" (Dargusch, 2014, p.192). The Goethe Institute (2018) define this type of mediation as a generic term referring to any activity in which a text is conveyed from one language into another. However, language mediation can also include conveying oral messages, not only texts, and they can be integrated with cultural or affect mediation.

The literature reveals three distinct terms to describe types of mediation depending on the use of language while mediating:

- 1) Cross-linguistic mediation. This implies the use of different languages when interacting, producing or receiving new meanings. Such mediation can take place in oral speech or written texts, but also nonverbally: Peltier and McCafferty (2010) examined gestural cross-linguistical variation among languages. Cross-linguistic mediation has been studied in the following formal FL education contexts: the Romanian curriculum in modern languages (Neagu, 2007); Profile Deutsch in Austria (Piribauer et al. 2014); and an innovative cross-linguistic test developed for the Greek Ministry of Education by Stathopoulou (2013). Piccardo and North (2020, p. 290) claimed that cross-linguistic mediation is also cultural mediation, although it is an aspect that has not been dealt with sufficiently in the literature "despite theoretical studies on the subject". These studies approach FL learners in the capacity of solving communication problems, but they have not encapsulated evidence of cross-linguistic mediation from a teacher's perspective as a resource to create bridges as meaning makers. Cross-linguistic mediation includes two languages as a minimum, and according to Stathopoulou (2015, p. 17), cross-linguistic, interlingual or interlinguistic mediation "involves the interplay between languages and as a communicative undertaking which entails the purposeful selection of information by the mediator from a source text in one language and the relaying of this information into another language to bridge communication gaps between interlocutors". To sum up this type of mediation, it involves the interpretation of meanings articulated between different language mediums.
- 2) Intralingual mediation. Dendrinos (2013) referred to situations where information is processed by teachers or students in the same language it was received (e.g., Spanish new information processed in Spanish). Mediating new meanings using one



single language, whether it is L1 or L2, would imply using intralingual mediation, that is connecting a new concept with students' previous knowledge without the presence of more than one language. The language used could be the target language, but not necessarily – it could also be the common language in the classroom or a third one. The purpose of using this type of mediation can be to strengthen and promote the use of the target language or for reasons of time management when using the shared common language, among other reasons. An example of intralingual mediation would be a Spanish teacher mediating the use of the present subjunctive in Spanish for students whose common language is English, using Spanish as the only language during the whole mediation process.

- 3) Dialogic mediation. Dialogic mediation is a term that was used within the SCT approach to refer to the internal dialogue occurring in the ZPD when some concepts are scaffolded through internal (mediating for self) or external (mediating for others) discourse. It focuses on the discourse or narrative that occurs between a teacher and learner or between learners. Dialogic mediation can “promote new stories of cooperation through the reflexive coordination of different voices and narratives” (Baraldi and Gavioli, 2012, p. 299). The analysis of dialogue, and in particular of the dialogic actions of teachers as mediators in an interaction, is a way to gain empirical knowledge of the process of mediation. The term ‘narrative mediation’ has also been used to refer to dialogic mediation (Baker, 2006), as it can be witnessed in teachers’ and students’ talk when co-constructing mediation in the classroom.

Distinguishing between these three categories of language-related mediation here does not imply they are specialised for language mediation, as they could all be used to mediate culture-related concepts. Such differentiation helps the researcher identify the use teachers decide to make of those languages present in their classrooms.

The literature has also paid attention to intercultural, cultural and cross-cultural types of mediation. The concept of culture as shared facts and information is a traditional one that is still present in some curricula and classrooms, despite the current intercultural language education paradigm. However, this thesis takes the idea of culture as a discourse (Kramsch and Young, 2010; Kramsch, 2013; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013) among users of the language as a social practice. According to Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng (2018, p. 294) “culture is a frame of reference through which individuals understand their world and make sense of meaning within and through their interactions with others and with their environment”. Culture is not to be learnt and taught apart from language but embedded in it, not presented as a completely outside world. As Agar (1994, p. 30) stated, “you can master grammar and the dictionary, but without culture, you won’t communicate. With



culture, you can communicate with rocky grammar and limited vocabulary.” The recognition of the importance that language teaching has as a world meaning-making system leads us to become aware of our own realities when we try to reach others. It is the combination of language and culture that we are reaching for when building bridges into different worlds, as without it communication is not possible.

A cultural mediator performs “a role that entails explaining the social meaning of specific cultural practices or traditions, filling in information gaps about social issues, customs, and values” (Dendrinos, 2013, para.16). A few years earlier, Gohard-Radenkovic et al. (2004, p. 219) defined a cultural mediator as a “social agent who designs and puts in place devices that make it possible to restore meaning where meaning has broken off, namely, he or she provides the one who does not understand with the means to understand”. Language teachers act as classroom resources themselves, providing further explanations with real-life examples to bring the students to an understanding of the target culture. Teachers might set examples and comparisons of cultural situations to restore meaning when it has not reached the students’ knowledge.

Comparable to the first type of language-related mediation discussed above (cross-linguistic mediation), cross-cultural mediation is a term used by Dasli (2011) when referring to understanding and negotiating between two different ideas or cultures. It can be argued that nowadays it is very unlikely that there will be only two cultures in an FL classroom – the common culture and the target culture – as our multicultural world integrates a variety of languages and cultures within a single classroom. However, teachers need to move from the target language (be it their native culture or not) and the students’ languages or cultures in a bidirectional process, which is why Dasli includes two ideas or cultures in the arrangement of cross-cultural mediation.

When teachers mediate cultures, it does not only require a transmission of foreign cultural knowledge in the classroom, such as “In Spain shops normally close from two to five in the afternoon”. It also requires further description and cultural background to start the intercultural mediation (e.g., a discussion of different weather and consequently a different lifestyle in Spain, as well as the fact that shops close much later).

#### *2.4.2. Strategies*

FL education is a field engaged with methods for teaching and learning, in which the creation of new meanings is at the forefront. Cubero and Ignacio (2011, p. 261) claimed “the importance of using a series of discursive resources to promote dialogue, the negotiation of meanings and the small changes in versions of phenomena, leading to the formulation of new ideas”. The discursive resources used by teachers can be talked about



as 'verbal' strategies. Depending on the scholar, the term to define these techniques varies: 'tools', 'parameters', 'ways' or 'strategies'. The literature on mediation also distinguishes a series of strategies that help illustrate how mediation is performed. Different strategies to perform mediation in the classroom have been examined by Feuerstein (1980), Gibbons (2003), Homs Vilá (2014), Stathopoulou (2015), Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza (2016), Schwartz and Gorbatt (2017), the Goethe Institute in Germany (2018), which are described in the next paragraphs of this section.

Feuerstein (1980, p.289) was among the first linguists to investigate mediation in the classroom, and he created a system for a mediated learning experience (MLE) with 12 different parameters as "indispensable criteria for evaluating the quality of MLE interaction" (Cheng, 2012, p. 478). His study was limited to evaluation, which is not a strategy, and it is not the final objective of this thesis to evaluate the results of mediation. However, Feuerstein's parameters may be present in instances of mediation by teachers. They are: significance, a purpose beyond the here and now, shared intention, a sense of competence, control of own behaviour, goal-setting, challenge, awareness of change, a belief in positive outcomes, sharing, individuality, and a sense of belonging (Feuerstein, 1980, p. 289). Similarly to Feuerstein, Stathopoulou (2015) created an inventory of mediation strategies (IMS) for evaluating and testing learners of English as a foreign language. Those characteristics can be meaningful initial signs of the presence of mediation in the classroom for evaluation purposes. Nonetheless, the purpose of this thesis is to know how mediation occurs, rather than assessing or evaluating students as mediators.

Gibbons (2003) did study teachers as mediators, although her context was primary school sciences. She observed two teachers mediating language and learning, however her paper does not incorporate the mediation of culture or affect nor is the subject a foreign language. Gibbons (2003, p. 267) identified some ways that teachers mediate, such as mode shifting through recasting, signalling to learners how to reformulate and indicating a need for reformulation "but handing this task over to the learner" as well as recontextualising personal knowledge. Despite being out of the scope of this research, since the context is not HE nor does it take into account the teaching of a foreign language, recasting and reformulation are strategies which are relevant for this study.

Homs Vilá (2014) studied mediational moves and built a systematic review of strategies discussed by researchers who focused on learners' language mediation. Her extensive list includes synonyms, paraphrasing, avoiding the word in the source language, using examples, miming or drawing, describing the meaning, inventing a new word, saying the word in the source language and using hypernyms. However, her study is based on learners



and does not consider mediation from a teacher's stance or as an educational act. Empirical evidence of how such strategies are developed from the teachers' point of view is missing, as is the relation amongst the different strategies she lists. The Goethe Institute (2018) in Germany focused on three basic forms of language mediation called less literal: summarising, paraphrasing and informal interpreting, which were also aimed at students' class participation but not teachers' use of those forms to mediate.

Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza (2016) studied teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and focused on how teachers mediated learners' oral participation. Eleven tools of mediation that had been reported in the existing sociocultural and second language acquisition literature were selected to identify the different mediation developed by EFL teachers in secondary schools. These tools are questions, elaboration, recasts, continuatives, translation, incomplete sentences ending in rising intonation, example options, repetition, metalinguistic comments or requests, forced-choice questions and modelling. All of them were found helpful to teachers who were trying to push students to say more and increase their oral participation in class. Their focus was not to examine the mediation of language and culture content, as this thesis intends to do, but to elicit learners' discourse in the target language. It would be interesting to test those strategies with a different objective and see whether teachers made as much use of them.

A year later, Schwartz and Gorbatt (2017) included the strategy of taking the teacher as a model for the second language learner, similarly to Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza's (2016) modelling, when they examined how teachers through their agency and application of mediation strategies encourage children to use their L2. The other mediation strategies identified in their study with primary school children learning English were requesting L2 use, scaffolding and managing the children's demand for direct translation.

Translation has been understood as a natural form of mediation, however not all translations performed by the FL teacher in classroom are mediation. There is a type of translation that can seem closer to mediation, which is pedagogical translation, involving the creation of possibilities to create meanings rather than merely transmitting a message with the same structure. Some researchers have associated interpretation with oral mediation, and translation with written mediation (Pérez Sinusía, 2017), to have in mind mediation when teaching. To what extent oral mediation in the FL classroom is related to translation, or if it is only in writing that this is relevant, is yet to be investigated. For these reasons, translation is considered a tool for mediation in this thesis, but not automatically a form of mediation, because that would limit the possibilities.



Within the remit of mediation, teachers assist students in learning how “to interpret, transfer or summarise freely and adequately in a different language” (Sanchez Castro, 2013, p.795). Therefore, translation can be a part of the whole process of mediation if it is selected as a tool to help negotiate meanings between languages and cultures. Conversely, researchers such as Baker (2006, p.11) believe that “interpreting (and translation) activities involve forms of mediation”. Aden (2012, p. 278; translated from French), who studied formal linguistic mediation, suggested that “if it is needed, teachers use a continuum that goes from direct translation to rephrasing with some personal comments sometimes”. Such a view of a practical continuum that teachers regulate according to the class’s needs, places translation as part of a larger-scale continuum where mediation processes are being played out. Translating and interpreting are part of mediation as one needs to discover the meaning of an unknown term and those two skills will be able to bridge the distance between the known and the unknown.

All of the strategies discussed so far focus on the use of language, such as simplifying information, recasting or translation. It is important to research other types of mediation strategy, such as those that include nonverbal information, which is generally and naturally integrated during oral and face-to-face interactions or face-to-face virtual interactions (Guye-Vuillème et al., 1999). Non-spoken language is particularly helpful when communicating in a difficult-to-hear situation or when you are speaking in a foreign language and sometimes need to stress the meaning of your message. Teachers’ gestures as pedagogic tools have attracted some researchers (Peltier and McCafferty, 2010; Porter, 2016; Denizci and Azaoui, 2020), as well as the relationship between verbal and nonverbal language in primary school students’ interactions (Daly and Unsworth, 2011). However, up to now no specific studies have been conducted on the use FL teachers make of nonverbal communication (NVC), especially as a mediation strategy in the classroom. In this study, nonverbal cues may include para-verbal speech features attributed to Spanish speakers. There exists the risk of considering all gestures as nonverbal mediation acts. For this reason, a filter will be needed to select and analyse only those gestures observed to serve as a bridge to convey meaning and help students interpret new concepts.

When learning a foreign language and culture, there are some conflicts in the new identity-forming that need to be mediated: “It is social and personal conflicts that motivate learning based on mediation, not only interlinguistic but an intercultural mediation based on the students and their capacity as storytellers and main characters of their own story” (Sánchez Santos, 2019, p. 23; translated from Spanish). It is arguable that not only students, but teachers have that strength/human potential. Chen and McConachy (2021, p. 16) suggested that



language teacher training invests more in the development of teachers' own interpretive and reflective capacities, as well as their abilities to talk about the link between own perspectives and own practices, linking everyday understandings of (communicative) experience with professional notions of teaching.

The recognition of how FL teachers can successfully use their own experiences when mediating could be a great step toward including it in teacher training programmes, especially if empirical evidence and practical cases are provided as it is in this thesis. Liddicoat and Kohler (2012) studied teachers' own linguistic and cultural identities as a mediating resource in which they drew on their lives to give examples, model and make comparisons. As Kohler (2015) stated, personalisation and interaction are crucial to an intercultural approach in language education, and it can offer students an insight into different worlds first-hand from an insider (the teacher) who challenges students' assumptions with these exchanges of personal stories.

The common focus for most of the body of literature about mediation strategies is how the learner mediates in the classroom, how the teacher can help the learner become a mediator or how to test mediation skills for learners. There is no attempt made to take into account the teacher's position as a mediator who intends to facilitate the negotiation and interpretation of new meanings, which could help the learner become a mediator (although this does not have to be the main objective of teachers' mediation moves in the classroom). Despite the lack of research on mediation strategies from the HE teacher's point of view or the connections amongst them when performed in the classroom, the important work described in this section provides a foundation that supports the validity of searching for strategies when observing mediation in FL classrooms.

## **2.5. Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has presented how mediation can be a complex process with boundaries and how despite the lack of research on teachers as mediators, researchers have thought and analysed this concept from different perspectives. Taking into consideration the sociocultural perspective and its influence in intercultural foreign language teaching and learning, mediation is presented in this research as a process carried out by FL teachers, moving beyond transferring meaning in communication to building a bridge to facilitate the interpretation of new meanings for students. Mediation is not presented in this research as a tool (such as a translation activity) nor as a strategy (such as a communicative act), it is more of a holistic teaching method that makes use of strategies. While there is now a substantial body of research examining mediation in the FL classroom, a good



understanding of how teachers perform when bridging new concepts orally in the Spanish language at the university level is still to be reached.

Some of the identified gaps in the literature are to be explored in this thesis, such as the translation of theory into practice (Díaz, 2013), which can be attained by providing common patterns followed by FL teachers when using mediational strategies in the classroom as empirical practical evidence. This practical evidence will also respond to Gibbons's (2003, p. 268) call for research, when she claimed that "further research needs to focus on analysing linguistically the mechanism through which teachers mediate between the language of their students and the linguistic demands of the school curriculum". Such mechanism may include some of the strategies found in the literature; however, there has been no exploration of teachers' thoughts while mediating (except for Kohler's, 2015 work), and including them in the analysis would offer a deeper understanding of such processes. It is necessary to investigate more about the processes followed by teachers and not so much by students. It is the action of using strategies through FL teacher talk in the classroom that allows these mediations to take place and shape new worlds. Some strategies used when bridging concepts in the classroom have already been studied, however there seems to be a tendency to study them in terms of their focus, but not as a whole process. Strategies are presented in an isolated manner, and there is a gap between connecting language-related (recasts, paraphrasing) and other types of strategies (nonverbal, teachers' experiences). It is worth asking whether they act in conjunction or in a separated fashion. Moreover, there is very limited research on nonverbal strategies in education, and even fewer studies on teachers' use of nonverbal strategies in FL classrooms, as pointed out by Denizci and Azaoui (2020). This project investigates specific empirical evidence on the operational moves followed by teachers from the beginning of a mediation opportunity until the meaning is reached by students.

The literature also suggests that there is little information available to show how teachers of Spanish as a foreign language in HE mediate in the classroom as a teaching process. Not only the research context (the Spanish language and the HE sector) is missing, but also the study of mediation except as it relates to evaluation or the training of learners as mediators. Oral mediation with a teaching purpose that engages with students in the classroom may follow different patterns than mediation suggested for students' evaluation of the language or their learning.

Furthermore, the literature does not indicate what types of mediations are found in Spanish as a FL classrooms in HE in the UK, the research context which will be represented in this thesis. Findings about the strategies used by teachers in such a context would be an original



contribution to the literature, proving empirical evidence of what procedures are actually deployed when teaching in the classroom.

Finally, one of the reasons for investigating language teachers' actions and perceptions regarding mediation is to be able to provide teachers with professional development opportunities that build on their existing beliefs and teaching practices. Currently, there is no research study focused on the development and characteristics of teachers' mediation in foreign language education. This study seeks to explore how such a contribution to mediation knowledge can provide FL teachers with concrete actions and a deeper awareness of ways in which they can effectively bridge the known with the unknown.

The next chapter develops the research questions and the methodology designed to answer these questions.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter seeks to give a clear rationale for the methodological approach that underpins this work. A qualitative research design was selected to provide an understanding of teachers as mediators in the Spanish classroom, and how mediation is constructed and achieved through specific moves. The focus of this work is not quantitative (counting how many times mediation is initiated or achieved) but rather about the knowledge of that process in order to understand the characteristics of instances of mediation.

This chapter is organised into five sections. Section 3.2 outlines the research design, including the rationale followed for this study, the research question, the epistemological and ontological approach and the selection and description of participants. Section 3.3 presents the data collection instruments, which include a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall sessions. Section 3.4 describes the procedures of data transcription, followed by section 3.5 on languages used in this research. Section 3.6. presents the analysis followed by a thematic analysis (TA) approach. Finally, ethical considerations are explained at the end of this chapter in section 3.7.

### **3.2 Research design**

The research design flows from the main research question (section 3.2.1), following a constructionist epistemological and ontological approach (section 3.2.2), which is the framework to find out teacher participants' actions in relation to mediation. Finally, the



research context of this thesis is FL teachers working in higher education institutions (HEIs), and information about the participants is described in section 3.2.3.

### *3.2.1. Research questions*

This thesis seeks to address the following research question and sub-questions, which reflect the need stated in the previous chapter for investigation into mediation practices in different teaching modes from the teacher's perspective.

**RQ.** How do Spanish language teachers mediate in the HE classroom?

This question focuses on FL teachers themselves and how their teaching practices within the intercultural language education paradigm are developed in terms of mediation. It includes three sub-questions constructed to narrow the themes included in this research.

**a)** What specific strategies are used by teachers to achieve mediation?

This sub-question aims to find out what actions, moves and tools, from an operational perspective, are put in place by teachers during mediation instances.

**b)** How are those strategies being used?

This second sub-question addresses the mechanism and processes followed when identified strategies are used with mediational purposes. It considers common affordances and characteristics such as how teachers perform, how teachers identify when mediation is needed, and possible relationships among naturally occurring mediation instances in the classroom.

**c)** To what extent do teachers mediating in different teaching modes differ from each other?

Finally, this sub-question aims to provide evidence for possible differences of any degree between distinct mediation practices occurring in online and face-to-face teaching modes.

### *3.2.2. Epistemological and ontological approach*

The research question in this study is investigated through a constructivist epistemology. As Hughes and Hitchcock (2002) indicates, epistemology assumptions have a major impact



upon the kinds of data-gathering choices made and the general view of the research process. This constructivist research paradigm rejects the positivist perspective of a single true and objective reality. In contrast, constructivist epistemology is linked to meaning constructed in distinct ways, “created by the subject’s interactions with the world” (Gray, 2009, p. 18). Those subjects or agents are represented in this thesis by FL teachers.

While epistemology provides a philosophical stance for what knowledge there is to know, ontology studies the nature of existence. Underpinning a constructionist epistemology in this thesis, there is a constructionist ontology, that works with a “world of meanings, represented in the signs and symbols that people use to think and communicate, language being the prime example” (Potter, 2006, p. 81). This work considers multiple realities, assuming a relativist ontology in which there is not a single reality, with different individuals differing in their perceptions according to their experience in the world. Moreover, this thesis is rooted in a holistic qualitative methodology (Ohta, 2000), bearing in mind how a sociocultural perspective supported by a constructionist epistemology and ontology demands in-depth knowledge of its participants’ realities.

The literature review has provided a certain level of knowledge, but the research was open to adapting or modifying the classification of purposes and ways of mediating, or creating new classifications, based on the empirical evidence obtained. For this reason, this study takes a data-driven inductive approach, rather than looking for a match with the theory or having a priori expectations. The aim of this inductive approach is to contribute with new theory based on the data. Concepts emerged through a process of interrogating the data in a reciprocal relationship with the analysis while being aware of existing theoretical concepts. The methodological challenge lies in adapting the methods and revising initial plans with regards to what data is being collected and how it will be analysed, thereby treating the research design as a continual process.

This research is an interpretive inquiry, aiming to tap into language teachers’ sense-making around the intercultural and interlingual mediation dimensions of language teaching and its use. Following an interpretivist research paradigm means understanding our social world is constantly being remade and the participants are actively engaged in such world-making. In this study of Spanish language teachers in UK HEIs, the aim is not to discover a single truth by which actions can be judged in a positivist epistemological way. Each participant brings their own truth into their work, and this is impacted by time and cultural location, and the researcher tries to access their perspective on reality through situated constructions. This qualitative interpretive approach attempts to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings that teachers bring to them. This research is consistent with respecting the



natural environment of classrooms and teachers' sites of action, but at the same time, it recognises the social construction of the phenomena recorded and focuses on experience as captured by the four participants.

### 3.2.3. *Participants*

The pool of participants was taken from modern languages departments within UK universities. The rationale for the sample of participants was opportunistic and followed the following criteria: Spanish language lecturers within a modern languages department at a HEI, with over 10 years of experience, who were teaching a module at the time of my data collection (between January and May in 2019). The first step in the search for participants was scanning through UK HEIs and preselecting those universities offering Spanish as a main degree. Despite being a section at risk due to numerous cuts to language provision in the country, there were still 62 HEIs in the UK providing programmes of study in modern foreign languages at the time of recruiting, according to Polisca et al. (2019). The second step was to contact those Spanish lecturers teaching Spanish as a main degree throughout the UK and ask them to disseminate the call among colleagues. Using the mailing lists of professional bodies, specifically the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland (AHGBI) and ELE-UK, helped introduce the "random element that is desirable for parameter estimation" (Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw, 2000) as much as possible. The process was longer than anticipated, as the call for participants took some time and responses were not immediate.

Initially, the research was intended to include NS and NNS FL teachers on the basis that NNSs are as great an asset to the classroom as NSs, as they can relate to the students as fellow outsiders viewing the culture from a national paradigm instead of presenting the insider vision of a NS. The question is not who has the more correct knowledge of the language, or the more authentic knowledge of the culture, but, as Medgyes (1992) states, how they contribute to students' learning with their previous experiences related to FL and culture. Byram (2002) agrees that neither the NS nor the NNS is the best teacher, but rather those who can assist students see relationships between their first culture and new cultures and help them to reflect on 'otherness' and be aware of their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives. Despite the ambition to include the teachers' mother tongues as a purposive sampling feature, specifically whether they are NSs or NNSs of Spanish, to gain a better representation of the teachers in the system and obtain different perspectives and experiences, there were no positive answers from teachers who were not born in Spanish-speaking countries when they were asked to join this project. Thus, in this thesis, the participants were all NSs, although they all speak different varieties of Spanish as well as other languages, which are individually detailed below. According to Kramsch and Zhang



(2018, p. 217), “multilingual instructors have more ways of constructing and interpreting meaning than those who operate in only one mode”. They can all operate in more than two languages (i.e., in at least one more language beyond English and Spanish) and have lived in different countries, expanding their NS profile and turning them into pluricultural and plurilingual teachers.

Regarding the level of teaching experience of the participants, in some cases, less experienced teachers might still be more focused on identifying the roots of their instructional concerns and so take longer to mediate those concerns to resolve them (Verity, 2000). For this reason, more experienced teachers are more likely to identify earlier their teaching practices that feature mediatory perspectives between languages and cultures in the classroom, due to their experience. Consequently, a minimum of 10 years’ experience seemed an appropriate requirement for participants.

One more aspect considered when selecting participants was the level of Spanish taught in their classrooms. Participants were selected if they fulfilled the additional requirement of teaching an intermediate level class of Spanish (at least B1 of the CEFR) during the observation time. This level was chosen because, by this stage, students have acquired enough Spanish culture and language knowledge to be comfortable discussing it with their teachers in the classroom. As Baumann (2009) observes, students at this level have a higher level of critical intercultural awareness compared to beginners. Thus, teachers may have more room to include interpretative elements among the discussion in the students’ native and target languages.

In order to capture the selected teachers’ professional background and demographic data, it was decided to create an online questionnaire (Appendix 5) and gather this information methodically in case there are differences in their practices based on their personal or professional trajectories. The questionnaire included open-ended responses and closed responses. Some questions used a rating scale, such as how many languages they knew, including the context and the level, which countries they had lived in, and their teaching experience. The question order was considered so that the final questions were easier to answer as participants tend to tire towards the end of a questionnaire. It was piloted by four Spanish language teachers who provided information about the length and the wording of the test.

Two initial participants volunteered to trial the tools, each of them teaching in a different mode (online and face-to-face) and different institutions. A total of four participants were selected for the study, after testing the tools with the two aforementioned participants. Two of these participants worked for the same institution teaching online Spanish degree



modules. The online participant who volunteered to trial the tools happened to work for the same institution. The other two participants taught face-to-face Spanish degree modules in two different institutions, which were not the same as the institution the face-to-face participant who helped trying the tools worked for.

Four teachers were selected, a number that allowed observations, SR and interviews to be made during one semester among different institutions in the country. A larger number may have impacted the researcher's ability to physically capture and collect the necessary data. It was also important to gather teaching practices during the same time period to have a similar curriculum and context for each. Bearing in mind the qualitative and sociocultural perspective of the research design, and to be able to find answers to the research question accordingly, the aim was to find a small number of participants to study their actions and perceptions more in depth in a qualitative study. Regarding the sex of the participants, three women and one man were selected. This generally corresponds to other studies looking at Spanish teachers (Muñoz-Basols, Rodríguez-Lifante and Cruz-Moya, 2017; Bárkányi and Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2019), where the majority of participants were also women; this reflects the gender distribution of Spanish lecturers in UK HEIs. Pseudonyms have been given to each participant to preserve their privacy. A detailed profile of the participants is provided here, followed by a table summarising the information.

### **Carmen**

This participant is a Spanish lecturer working remotely for an online institution. She has Mexican origins, and she speaks a Mexican variant of Spanish since Mexico City was her homeplace. Carmen is plurilingual, speaking three languages at an advanced level – Spanish, English and German – and has an intermediate level of French. She has lived in Mexico and the United Kingdom. She graduated with a BA in Interpretation and completed an online BA in Modern Languages with a minor in French and German at an online HEI. She complemented her studies with an MA in Spanish as a Second Language and has two extra qualifications: one focused on adult education and a fellowship status at the Higher Education Academy (HEA; now known as Advance HE). She is the participant with the most extensive teaching experience, having worked for over 24 years as a Spanish teacher.

### **Diana**

This participant is also a Spanish lecturer working remotely for an online institution. She was born in Spain, with a south-western Spanish and Madrid accent. Apart from Spanish and English, which are languages she learnt while living in Spain and the United Kingdom, she studied French as a foreign language at an intermediate level. She graduated from university with a BA in History, completed a Spanish diploma equivalent to a Postgraduate



Certificate in Education in England, and achieved extra qualifications in adult education. She had been working for over 20 years as a Spanish teacher in England.

### **Elena**

This participant is a Spanish lecturer working at a face-to-face institution. She has Catalan and Spanish as her native languages. Similarly to the rest of the participants, she has an intermediate level of French. In her case, she has experienced living in Spain, the United Kingdom and France. She graduated in Hispanic philology and complemented her university studies with an MA in Spanish as a Second Language, like Carmen. She has achieved a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practices at the HEA. In total, she had been working as a Spanish teacher for over 15 years.

### **Fernando**

This participant is a Spanish lecturer working at a face-to-face institution. He has a septentrional Spanish accent. He speaks three more languages apart from Spanish and English: Czech, German and French. He learnt German and French at university. However, he learnt Czech in the Czech Republic, one of the five countries in which he has lived. The rest of his experience living abroad includes Spain, the United States, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. He graduated with an English philology degree at university and complemented his training with the Spanish equivalent of an English Postgraduate Certificate in Education. He had between 6 and 10 years of experience teaching Spanish in England and more than 15 years of experience overall.



Table 2. Participants' information summarised

Participant	Teaching mode	Origin	Spanish variant	Languages spoken	Countries lived in	Level of English	Education	Experience
<b>Carmen</b>	Online	Mexico	Mexican Spanish (Mexico City)	Spanish English German French	Mexico and UK	Advanced (lived in the UK for more than 25 years)	BA Interpretation. BA Modern Languages with minor in French and German. MA in Spanish as a Second Language. Adult education HEA qualification.	24 years
<b>Diana</b>	Online	Spain	Western Andalusian and Madrilenian	Spanish English French	Spain and UK	Advanced (lived in the UK for more than 25 years)	BA in History. Spanish diploma equivalent to PGCE in England. Adult education qualification.	20 years
<b>Elena</b>	Face-to-face	Spain	Catalan	Catalan Spanish English French	Spain, UK and France	Advanced (lived in the UK for more than 10 years)	BA in Hispanic Philology. MA in Spanish as a Second Language. HEA qualification.	15 years
<b>Fernando</b>	Face-to-face	Spain	Septentrional Spanish	Spanish English Czech French German	Spain, UK, USA, Czech Republic and Ireland	Advanced (lived in the UK for nearly 10 years)	BA in English Philology. Spanish diploma equivalent to PGCE in England.	15 years



The fact that all participants could speak French did allow for the possibility of using this language when mediating in the classroom with those students who speak that language; it is commonly found at HEIs in Spanish as a FL classrooms. There was an array of different accents and dialects among participants, which could potentially be relevant in gathering a diverse range of mediative examples between cultures and languages. Finally, all participants considered that they had an advanced level of English because they had been living in the UK for more than 25 years (older participants Carmen and Diana) or 10 years (Elena and Fernando).

### **3.3. Data collection**

This section outlines the processes involved in each data collection tool: classroom observations, stimulated recall (SR) sessions and semi-structured interviews. It also covers the justification for why each is appropriate for this specific study. These tools were adapted and adjusted after testing before the study was conducted, which helped to build a more effective and relevant data collection for the study. Finally, the importance of continuous triangulation when analysing data is explained.

#### **3.3.1. Testing the tools**

Three data collection instruments (observations, SR and interviews) and the research design were tested in a short rehearsal carried out at the end of the first term in the second academic year of this PhD (2018-2019). The purpose was to adjust the tools as required and then proceed with the study in the second term, since language classes as part of a main degree rarely take place in the third term of the year at UK HEIs.

An opportunity sample for testing the tools was obtained when the first and nearest participants replied to the call for volunteers, with a face-to-face and an online participant. Therefore, these two volunteers from two different institutions assisted with the initial testing and rehearsal. The HEI of one participant provided online degree modules in Spanish as a FL and the HEI for the other participant that volunteered offered face-to-face modules in Spanish only.

Classroom observation was the first method employed with participants to watch and record mediation practices unfold. Testing the tools and equipment for this method was essential to understand how a microphone for participants was not as necessary as initially thought, and how recording audio as well as video, with different tools (audio recorder and video cameras), was in fact more comfortable for participants who did not have to attach a microphone to their clothes and a safe manner to ensure everything was recorded. Regarding the cameras, different models were used to test the quality and duration of the video. The cameras were able to record a maximum of 20 minutes, which results in three



videos per hour. Each camera battery lasted about an hour and a half, so a second camera was prepared to continue recording if the class lasted longer.

Observation sheets designed to take notes during the video observation (see Appendix 2) were not used as planned because it was too complicated to take care of the equipment, take field notes and complete the mediation typology classification which was reflected in the observation sheet at the same time. It was decided to use this sheet while analysing the videos at home and have it only as reference support while observing lessons. A final lesson learnt from this trial video observation was the importance of instructing the teacher participants that they should ignore the researcher in the classroom and not include her in the session, even though she was a Spanish teacher and could have been used as a resource in the classroom.

During the SR sessions, it was not easy to find a balance between friendliness and impartiality with participants when they expressed their discomfort with some of their actions, embarrassment when listening to themselves or when they regretted that a particular activity did not work out as well as it normally does. Listening to the recordings of the trial SR dialogues made it possible for the researcher to reflect and identify moments where a more neutral comment not to influence the participant could have been developed. Speech during SR sessions was then revised and improved to offer an active listening part without judging, praising or suggesting attitudes when carrying out these sessions.

Following the trial interviews, the interview was reordered and built in a more specific and direct way, asking questions about mediation and their understanding of this concept. The idea of an initial questionnaire with background data emerged when the answers to the first question in the original interview ("Can you tell me a bit about yourself and how you started in this position?") were analysed. It felt repetitive, as researcher and participants had met before and this content had already been answered, but participants were interested in talking about their professional and personal careers. For this reason, after piloting the interview, it was decided to collect participants' background information differently to solve this problem and collect demographic details at the same time.

While trialling the tools, each participant was observed over two classes, with an SR session after each, followed by a final interview. In total there were 5 hours and 40 minutes of video recordings of classes, 3 hours and 7 minutes of SR sessions and 1 hour and 46 minutes of interviews. A total of 10 hours 32 minutes of data was collected in this initial trial. Despite requiring more time and resources, including extra costs, this rehearsal was seen as a way to estimate the efficacy of research instruments, assess their feasibility and add credibility to the study.



### 3.3.2. *Classroom observations*

Classroom observation was crucial to understanding how mediation was practised within particular learning tasks. Different techniques were used to record each teaching mode. This section starts describing face-to-face observations and then online observations follow.

Face-to-face classes were videorecorded in order to capture a permanent record of the data and to be able to be aware of each movement made by the teacher, and be able to watch them as many times as necessary after class. Such para-verbal features provided context for understanding the content of the analysis. Teacher discourse could have been captured with audio recordings only, but interactions and the aforementioned movements could not have been recorded. None of the participants had been videorecorded while teaching before.

The video recordings were supplemented with field notes taken while observing the classes. The initial testing of classroom observation sheets demonstrated the need to have some additional field notes as sometimes the rhythm of the class was too fast to write about each part of potential mediational moves by the teacher. It was a physically complex process to videorecord the sessions while taking notes on the observation sheet initially created to collect data. Field notes documented necessary contextual information such as general information on how the teacher approached students, the examples or gestures used and other details such as which pages of material were being covered in class, to support later steps when the data was being revised to prepare for the next research tool used (the SR sessions).

Two cameras with audio and video recording possibilities, a tripod and an audio recorder were the equipment used in each face-to-face observed lesson. To record the classroom sessions, a single camera on a tripod was used. Because of the limitations of the camera batteries, two cameras were taken to each class, with the camera being swapped over after approximately 90 minutes. A third camera directed at students would have been useful to see their reactions, but there were two reasons to do without this. The first was the research question for this study: the focus was on teachers' actions. Additionally, the lack of a camera directed at the students made it easier to preserve their confidentiality, so it was decided to use a single camera that could be redirected at whoever was talking.

Prior to the four lessons that were recorded face-to-face, a casual observation session took place with each participant when recruiting their students' consent (on the form in Appendix 7) at the initial stage of the research. It was considered important to bring all the recording equipment to the class on this first occasion to familiarise both the students and the teacher with it. The observations made in these sessions were helpful to determine the best



locations in the classroom for the investigator and the video camera in order to capture a maximum of information and insights during data collection. The classroom observations conducted were formal in the sense that they were always planned, and the students could see the investigator taking field notes in a corner of the class where the tripod was set up and the camera was on. An audio recorder was left on the teacher's desk as a safety plan in case something went wrong with the cameras and to allow for a more fine-grained analysis (van Compernelle, 2016).

The fact that the face-to-face teachers knew the students from previous years of teaching beginner level or from previous seminars helped the attitudes of the students toward the researcher because a classroom community where both students and the teacher felt comfortable with each other had already been established. This meant that they were not as concerned with aspects such as being new to the module or not knowing what to expect during the sessions. Every time a recording took place, students and the teachers appeared to be more relaxed with the camera's presence as they stopped looking at it and this made the classes happen more naturally.

One of the benefits of collecting video images for teachers' mediation practices is the possibility to provide relevant images in the analysis. The use of one camera that was manhandled by the researcher meant it could be moved and directed at the speaker or the environment. At the same time, it could be placed in a fixed location at times when field notes were being taken or during longer periods when teachers and students did not interact or physically move. For this reason, some excerpts in this thesis have images matching the scenes and some others don't. Despite the potential advantages of having two cameras, one of them static and the other one at the researcher's disposal, the benefits of such an alternative did not outweigh the idea of carrying a single camera. The research approach to this study meant there was the completeness of data and the use of one camera was enough to gather significant data in face-to-face observations.

Online classes were recorded by participants, as they were used to recording their classes to upload it sometimes in their institution platform. However, this recording did not include their faces as cameras were always off. The online classes were recorded by teachers with a screen capture system which kept a full record of the teacher's delivery of the topic and their interactions with students. Teachers' or students' faces were never seen in these online sessions as their cameras were off during class and only their microphone and teacher's computer screen were shared. Therefore, it was not necessary to be present in online teaching sessions since all participants were having the same online experience as the researcher through a computer. Once the recording was available in the educational



platform, the researcher watched it while taking field notes, in preparation for the following SR session. The difference with face-to-face observations is that the recording could be stopped as many times as possible and was not watched live but usually a few minutes or hours later.

On the other hand, face-to-face sessions required the researcher to stay in the classroom manning the camera as the movement in that environment would not have been possible to capture with a static camera. Thanks to the tripod, the camera could move to follow the teacher and field notes captured whatever actions the camera did not because these happened at the same time as the teacher's talk. Online observations were less obtrusive although fewer elements (e.g., nonverbal communication) could be captured.

Similarly, with the face-to-face participants, there was a trustworthy and comfortable environment since there was a continuity of teaching from the first term and everybody was acquainted with each other. On the other hand, in the online courses, the participants did not witness the researcher's presence in their classes, as the recording was done automatically by the teacher after informing the students. This aspect was convenient for the maintenance of natural, ordinary conditions that did not alter the classroom.

Classroom observations were conducted for four lessons (each usually 2 hours long) per teacher so that they were not observed on a single random occasion but instead followed during several sessions to understand the dynamics of their classes. This was the reason why four lessons were observed as it was considered beneficial to follow the same topic over different weeks to observe how relationships were built between teachers and students and to ensure mediation opportunities were allowed within a particular topical unit. The topics that were covered varied across the teachers and institutions, but this was not an obstacle to observing and capturing mediation practices. The fact that four classes were recorded, usually one per week, resulted in a more linear study.

### *3.3.3. Stimulated recall*

As a supplement to the empirical evidence provided by the videos of the lessons, stimulated recall (SR) sessions were carried out to provide teachers with a chance to reflect on their actions and self-report reasons for their mediation (or the lack of it) in the classroom. These sessions were audio-recorded and dealt with inquiries about teachers' level of awareness of their own actions to enable them to verbalise their moves in the classroom while thinking aloud and contrasting what they did with their intentions. This cognitive process in motion supported them in expressing themselves and filling in information that as an observer one can miss. SR is an introspective method that assumes "that some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation



during the event itself” (Gass and Mackey, 2000, p. 17). The SR sessions consisted of a retrospective interview based on the video of the lessons focusing on the mediation tools used (how), the time of this mediation (when), the agent achieving it (who) and the skills activated or how this mediation was achieved. These sessions constituted dialogues between the researcher and the teacher, while watching and listening to the recorded interactions that occurred in the classroom between the teacher and students. These situations were called ‘polyphonic situations’ by Bakhtin and Holquist (1981), where the teacher externalises internal dialogues that happened in the classroom to reflect on them. These sessions were led by the researcher, who verbally elicited teachers’ reflections on their working repertoire that was exposed, or not, in the videos (Fumiya, 2017). This method has the potential to shed additional light on issues that may remain unresolved through empirical data alone (Gass and Mackey, 2000), for example, nonverbal and backchannelling behaviour or the teacher’s thoughts.

Preparing to conduct an SR session was a difficult exercise. It included watching the videos again and identifying moments for consideration in terms of the specific strategies used, the characteristics of how and why teachers used those actions and specific questions about their teaching modality (online or face-to-face) and whether it was affecting mediation moves. Based on the literature and having defined mediation as connecting new meanings to students by bridging the known with the unknown, instances were selected where the teacher interpreted unknown concepts and ideas for students. Some moments were selected because the researcher saw a lack of mediation and wanted to find out why that was. The number of moments selected depended on time as participants were asked to reflect for about an hour, but no more, so they could continue their work and be able to block this time again for the next session.

The SR sessions were conducted by posing selecting some teaching moments and posing questions such as: What did you have in mind when explaining this concept? Did you change some parts of your teaching plan because of the students’ comments? (see Appendix 3 for all questions posed during SR sessions). There was no mention of the term mediation on purpose to avoid the bias of contaminating their comments. The idea of having a conversation where they could freely express their thoughts on their actions was to capture teachers’ decisions taken, to better understand their reasoning. One further benefit of using this method was that the researcher became more familiar with the data and immersed herself in a process of watching and annotating the initial analytic observations.

This method is indeed an important aspect of the researcher’s reflective process because, as Gaies (1991, p. 14) states, “what we see, when we observe teachers and learners in



action, is not the mechanical application of methods and techniques, but rather a reflection of how teachers have interpreted these things". The questions asked and the information that they elicited helped to understand what mechanisms were activated and the reasons why that led teachers to their mediation practices, which were not all necessarily captured with the video observation. The questions asked during the SR sessions require self-reflexive inquiry. Such a self-reflective method can generate innovation (Korshagen and Wubbels, 1995) and improve teaching practice, since reflective teachers are more aware of their actions and consequences (Grant and Zeichner, 2014). Moreover, researchers have recognised that reflection is a "source of privileged knowledge" (Lynch, 2000, p. 26), which raises teachers' self-awareness so that they are better able to monitor their own mediation practices and, as (Farrell, 2013) puts it, explore their own beliefs and previous experiences that impact on their pedagogical decisions.

One of the hardest tasks in conducting the SR sessions was to refrain from making any comments that could potentially alter participants' responses in any way. Therefore, care was taken to pose orientation questions only and convey a non-judgemental attitude so that participants were freely able to express their own thoughts in their own words. The guided questions that followed helped present the selected instances to the teacher who was free to propose different ones.

It was crucial to have as little time lag as possible between the event to be recalled and the probe (Gass and Mackey, 2000) to avoid inaccuracies caused by poor recall. Despite the additional time and work involved, previous studies on teachers as mediators in the classroom (Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016) have successfully used this method and highlighted the importance of having a clear memory of the class with only a short time between the observation and the SR session. In this study, the SR sessions were carefully planned to occur soon after the relevant classroom observations, as is detailed in Appendix 10. All 16 recall sessions were done within the same week of the observed lesson, with one exception which took longer due to accommodating a suitable time for both the participant and the researcher. Online SR sessions were delivered and videorecorded on Skype, where the researcher was able to share the screen so participants could watch the videos and comment on them. As well as recording through Skype, an audio recorded version was also done as a backup since Skype could only store the recorded video for a limited number of days. Face-to-face SR sessions took place at the teachers' personal offices in their universities, and these were audio-recorded only. The researcher made use of a work laptop to be able to show the videos to participants in these cases.



### 3.3.4. *Semi-structured interviews*

Despite having some comments from the teachers on their class management and decision-making in each SR session, it seemed necessary to organise an interview where the researcher could pose specific questions to explore the participants' thoughts on mediation practices. Some degree of control over the interview situation was required (Hughes and Hitchcock, 2002) to be able to have some more direct answers to this study, and these were the reasons for choosing a semi-structured interview. A recorded conversational encounter using a standardised semi-structured interview tool (see Appendix 4) enabled questions to be asked more explicitly about the mediation process and the teachers' awareness of it. A semi-structured interview style was used to gain control over the questions and answers, as this was not the case with the other two tools used – classroom observation is a non-invasive method respecting the natural environment and development of events, and the SR sessions did not offer the chance to make inquiries about mediation explicitly. This third and last step of data collection, the semi-structured interviews, allowed the possibility of leaving participants space for their comments but also restricted their answers to the areas of interest in the study. In order to prevent potential alienation of the teachers, abstract questions were avoided. For this reason, the questions were designed to be clear, direct and short. Some interview probes were also planned and thought out in advance to be able to follow on from answers when necessary.

Tracing the application and modification of a teacher's repertoire, which can be seen as an "invisible reservoir of knowledge (*savoirs*) and know-how (*savoir-faire*) applied to the specific matter of teaching" (Fumiya, 2017), can be effectively done by way of an interview. In order to elicit teachers' perspectives on mediation and their own perceptions as mediators, specific questions were developed for the semi-structured interview. The full set of those questions is provided in Appendix 4, but some of the questions were: Do you agree with the idea that one of the roles of language teachers is to create bridges between languages and cultures? Why? What approaches, strategies or activities do you use to help students make links between their own languages and varieties of Spanish? What approaches, strategies or activities do you use to help students make links between their own cultures and Spanish-speaking cultures?

The individual semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded once all classroom observations and SR session had been completed (see Appendix 10 for the specific dates for when each item of data for each participant was collected). If the questions about mediation had been asked before that point, it could have altered the teaching practices and participants' answers may not have been realistic. These interviews were a follow-up to all the SR sessions exploring issues mentioned in those sessions which participants took



as examples in some of the questions asked in the interview. Establishing a rapport with the participants over the previous four weeks of observations helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere for the interviews. All interviews were audio and videorecorded through Skype, except for the interview with Fernando, which was conducted in his office with an audio recorder. According to Gray (2009), an interviewer should do their utmost to remain impartial so that they do not affect the results. As a consequence, care was taken trying not to provide answers for the interviewees and use some prepared prompts were used if the questions were not directly answered.

With its variety of qualitative methods of data collection, this study provided a triangulation design to explore different perspectives on the research process, which improves the probability that the findings and interpretations are credible and reliable. According to Richards (2012), triangulation brings different methods to bear on research questions in order to better understand it. Data were collected from the initial questionnaire, classroom observations, SR sessions, and the final interview, and each of these supported the other on the results. Participants' comments about their actions seen in the videos when doing SR sessions were contrasted with their classroom moves, and so data was being triangulated through their comments, field notes and the video taken during the observed sessions. As Gass and Mackey (2000, p. 19) argues, "stimulated recall is often employed in conjunction with other methodologies, as a means of triangulation or further exploration". In effect, once the final interview was completed, more data could be triangulated with participants' responses and the input collected during classroom observations and SR sessions.

### **3.4. Data transcription**

Having close contact with the data at an early stage is advisable for novice qualitative researchers. Therefore, I transcribed my own tapes in this study, despite the number of hours that were recorded. The data transcription for this study comprises the video recordings from the face-to-face lessons and screen recordings with audio from the online lessons, the audio recordings of each SR session and the final interviews. This came to a total of 43 hours and 18 minutes of transcription. More detail about the length of sessions and a summary of the data that was collected and transcribed can be found in Appendix 10.

Further insight into the research topic was provided by using a more detailed transcription of the dialogues that occurred during the recorded lessons. Classroom video observations were the most challenging transcripts since there were simultaneous conversations between teacher and students in face-to-face sessions. This is the reason why teacher talk



was a priority when transcribing. SR sessions and interviews were fully transcribed including comments from the researcher and participants. Many references to the videos taken during classes were made in SR sessions, which made it possible to create cross-references to episodes already transcribed in the previous step of video observations. A pedal and tools such as Inqscribe and a file converter were used to speed up the long process of transcribing 43 hours of data.

Data was fully transcribed, instead of selectively transcribed, which allowed for the inclusion of nonverbal information from field notes and video observations. The transcription of nonverbal elements, which highlights gestures, with double parentheses, facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of how to present these elements in the data. The gestures in double parentheses were described as comments because they were considered nonverbal mediation strategies. Normal parentheses are used for transcriber comments and general observations. Hepburn (2017, p. 105) suggests that a simple way of presenting transcriptions uses square brackets “to indicative visible conduct that takes place simultaneously with speech”, and this has been the convention chosen for the nonverbal data transcription in this study. A visual representation is following:

( ) – nonverbal elements

(( )) – nonverbal elements considered mediation

[ ] – nonverbal element + speech

An example of transcription is the following:

02 **Elena:** *mmm ... a ver dónde está* (she looks at the book). [*Ah! El césped es eso*  
03 ((She uses her left hand and with her index finger points towards the window as  
04 soon as she says *césped*. Outside the window there is green space)), *por ejemplo*]

Students, as well as teachers, who appear in the interactions recorded in each excerpt on the analysis have been given pseudonyms. The teachers' pseudonyms and profiles are given in section 3.2.3. The students were allocated numbers (e.g., S1, S2) and SS was used when the majority of students said something (e.g., SS: hahaha). If teachers said one of the students' names in class, those names have also been anonymised and changed for other random names. S1 has been used for the first student in every excerpt. For example, S1 in an excerpt taken from the participant named Elena, will not be the same person as S1 in Diana's excerpts. However, for consistency reasons, all transcriptions have used S1, S2, S3 in the order students intervened.



### 3.5. Languages in this research

With the exception of in-classroom data, where there was a mix of the target language (Spanish) and the common language in the classroom (English), everything else was mainly recorded and transcribed in Spanish, the native language of the participants and the researcher. Having said that, English was used occasionally during SR sessions or interviews when participants were more comfortable using this language for certain terms, because they were more used to saying certain things in English in their profession. Classroom observation transcripts show a larger amount of Spanish than English, although some parts of these sessions did happen in English or other languages in specific cases. As the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011, p. 10) guidelines recommend, “when researching in more than one language or culture, researchers should consider the effects of translation and/or interpretation on participants’ understanding of what is involved”. Parts of this multilingual data were translated by the researcher into English to illustrate the findings and analysed excerpts included in this thesis. A full translation from Spanish into English of each excerpt used is also presented in Appendix 12.

### 3.6. Data analysis

This thesis looks at teachers’ mediation practices in the classroom, and therefore it needs to know what teachers think of mediation and their own perceptions of themselves. An appropriate way to analyse the data is to find what topics came up concerning different functions for mediation practices. Monzó and Rueda (2003) was followed regarding the identification of recurrent broad themes in the recorded observations, which helped create the categories for future analysis. The analysis followed a thematic or content analysis to extract meaningful insights into the main themes used. Identifying critical moments during the classroom observations, that is to say instances of mediation, was key to start differentiating each excerpt and at the same time finding commonalities.

All data – classroom transcriptions and videos, transcriptions of SR conversations and transcriptions of interviews – was submitted to this thematic approach. It involved reviewing the content found in themes in detail using a constant comparison method to generate key topics or themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). Teachers were asked to share their lesson plan for each recorded session, to provide some guidance to the researcher about the material being covered in class to make identifying exercises and references easier. Another reason for these lesson plans was to check whether key points that happened to be mediated in class were highlighted in any way prior to the class. All the data was entered into the software package NVivo12 (and then the later version NVivo 12Plus) and coded



and recoded until several nodes were generated, indicative of teachers' mediation practices (Woolhouse et al., 2013). In this section, the thematic analysis that was carried out for textual data and nonverbal communication analysis is explained.

### *3.6.1. Thematic analysis*

Thematic analysis (TA) or content analysis (CA) works by identifying themes that emerge at different levels, organising them and generating categories to reveal underlying patterns from which global themes can be identified (Richards, 2012). This is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting the themes that organise and describe the data in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006) breaking down the text in terms of identified themes.

TA entailed the creation of a criteria of selected themes to achieve a measure of objectivity. Each participant was introduced under a case in NVivo (e.g., case C for Carmen, case D for Diana) and each case had three subcategories, one for each tool used to collect data, that were numbered according to the session (e.g., C>classroom observations 1, C>SR session1 and C>interview). Fieldnotes and lesson plans were not uploaded on NVivo but analysed on paper.

The first step was to read the transcript for the first lesson observed and start identifying teachers' actions to bridge a new concept or idea in class. Those moments were selected and singled out into nodes, which were the future themes generated in this thesis. The same process was followed with SR sessions, and that meant some mediatory moments selected already belonged to a node created when the transcripts of observed lesson took place, which evidenced the repetition of some general patterns that were these nodes or themes. It also meant some more potential nodes were created. Cross-checking nodes or themes identified in the classroom observations with SR sessions, field notes, lesson plans and interviews offered a clearer picture of "all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle" (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke and Hayfield, 2022, p. 65). Those examples were better indications of strategies as they were corroborated and triangulated. At this stage, there were multiple nodes created and each of them had one or more extracts from transcripts assigned.

Each node had an initial name according to the main action followed by the teacher when attempting at mediating a concept in class. These initial nodes included comparisons, dictionary, examples, games, humour, paraphrasing, pronunciation, scaffolding, claps, gaze, head, hand gestures, personal experiences, professional experiences or translation. Any comments related to those identified nodes (or themes) identified were also singled out in the interviews' transcripts. Once those nodes were created, the next step was twofold. Firstly, those nodes were regrouped into wider notes or categories: linguistic, nonverbal and



personal experiences. Lastly, the specific nodes in each wider note or category were renamed to more detailed and accurate labels (e.g., head and hand gestures were renamed to miming, which went under nonverbal nodes/themes). The wider nodes or categories were the three groups of strategies identified in this study, and the specific nodes were the subthemes where excerpts of mediation instances illustrated their purpose with a deeper analysis.

*Table 3. Themes identified*

<b>Wider nodes/ categories = Main strategies in this study</b>	<b>Linguistic Strategies (named Linguistic codes on NVivo)</b>	<b>Nonverbal Strategies (named nonverbal codes on NVivo)</b>	<b>Personal Experiences Strategies (named personal experiences codes on NVivo)</b>
<b>Subthemes/subcategories Specific strategies where concrete extracts were analysed</b>	Paraphrasing	Miming	Teachers as L2 students
	Explaining	Showing	Teachers outside language educational context
	Exemplifying	Pointing	Teachers as L2 users
	Translation		

Two images of the initial nodes coded, and analysis of excerpts done in NVivo are attached in Appendix 13.

This was an inductive process continuously evaluated and compared against the data to check if all participants were following similar identified strategies. Not all identified nodes were used since the deeper analysis qualified only a few cases of teachers' mediation as it is understood in this thesis. A microanalysis capturing "what happened before and what happened next" (van Compernelle, 2016, p. 176) was done for each line of the excerpts that were selected as instances of mediation performances. Describing the interaction between teachers and students in relation to the mediation purpose for teachers' moves allowed the researcher to draw conclusions about the characteristics of each strategy.



This thesis relies on textual data, but also images and sounds from the video recordings. This type of data includes gestures, gaze, reactions or volume of the voice (Hall and Looney, 2019). Within thematic or context analysis, nonverbal behaviour and communication are also considered, and visual phenomena followed a similar approach to the text. Notes on nonverbal behaviour were classified as themes in NVivo and those textual extracts were matched with the corresponding parts of the video that was also uploaded on NVivo. Those embodied elements and conduct are often taken for granted when analysing videos (Mondada, 2019). Nevertheless, they were included in the thematic analysis to analyse nonverbal mediations in face-to-face teachers' data, since "these gestures are salient and significant for us" (Jewitt, 2014). A coding scheme to classify different aspects of the nonverbal communication was created assigning a node to each type of gesture, laugh or silence. All nonverbal communication that seemed to have a connection with teachers' mediation were identified and coded. Its meanings were interpreted when they were cross compared with other mediation themes and regrouped into one strategy.

TA can be controversial as it has different readings, and its reliability can be questioned. Moreover, there can be an analysis interpretation overlay when taking into account the limited interpretative power of TA. For this reason, during the interpretive process, themes were contrasted with expert peer colleagues and cross-compared among different participants to ensure reliability and conceptual clarity with the global themes selected.

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

It was important to take great ethical care when designing this research. Accessing data ethically while respecting each participant's institution's regulations was vital to start shaping principled relationships with each of the participants. Specific information for each HEI, accessing students' and teachers' classrooms and finally building a relationship with participants, are the contents of this chapter.

The first action in terms of ensuring appropriate ethical clearance was contacting the participants' HEIs and checking they all had specific ethical protocols in place to protect confidentiality. That was all approved, and each university granted access to video recording and audio recording in their premises.

Every participant was sent an information leaflet (Appendix 8) about this research project by email and once they opted in, they were sent the voluntary consent form (Appendix 6). In the case of students, they were given the relevant consent form and information leaflet (Appendix 9 and 7). One of the main concerns at the start of data collection was gaining the consent of the students in the classroom since the consent of all students registered was required to be able to videorecord their class. All of the students in the classroom signed



the consent form. For the face-to-face classes, it was considered good research practice to explain the project in person, so the classes were visited to discuss it with the students, and this seemed to help gain their confidence. The project was introduced for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of a lesson and then the students were left with their teacher and told that they had until the end of the class to ask any questions they had about the consent form, as the main researcher would come back to collect these forms. This technique was used to alleviate the pressure of having to sign in front of the researcher. In contrast, online teacher participants considered that their students had already given consent to be recorded in online sessions and that they had accepted that these sessions would be posted on their university platform under a previously signed agreement. For this reason, it was decided that teachers' consent in the online environment was enough to have access to those recorded sessions. An initial video call with online teachers served the function of the face-to-face meeting with these participants when explaining the project and gaining their consent. Due to the small sample of participants (two online and two face-to-face teachers), it was not required to complete any more specific consent to research teachers at any institution.

Teachers and students were informed that the information extracted from the recordings would only be used for research purposes, and they had the option to withdraw from the project right up to the start of the data analysis. The fact that the study aimed to observe mediation practices was not enclosed to participants, as this would have had an impact on their teaching practices. There would have been a risk that teacher participants would start researching to find out about what mediation is and how to perform it in the classroom. This would have altered the reality of their sessions portraying unnatural or subjective practices.

The focus of this study was to capture instantiations of mediation, understand its diverse uses in the classroom and analyse teachers' self-reflection as mediators, therefore the researcher's dual identity as a teacher and investigator had to be differentiated so as not to be intrusive in the data. As a consequence, it was crucial to be aware that the researcher's preconceived ideas may influence some responses, and acknowledge that as a researcher, it is important to remain impartial throughout the course of the study. To minimise any bias as an insider researcher, the concept of mediation remained the focus when observing lessons and reflecting with the participants during SR sessions, and comments on how to teach Spanish with different activities or other teacher-related issues were avoided when collecting data. Despite having to overcome this bias to make sure the data collected and analysed was objective, there were some positive aspects of being seen as an equal and having an insider perspective. Teacher participants could speak about certain topics or classroom dynamics they knew I would understand easily as we share similar jobs. Gaining



teachers' and students' trust was also easier once they knew I was a Spanish teacher myself, whose goal was researching teachers' practices to contribute to this area of knowledge. Interpersonal skills and teaching experience when approaching Spanish teachers at HE helped to create an unthreatening, self-controlled, supportive, polite and cordial interaction where the interviewees felt comfortable giving their responses.

All data such as names and personal information were anonymised, coded depending on the institution and treated confidentially. Management and storage of data were secured. Educational research implies different responsibilities for the participants and the researcher. These responsibilities are outlined in the British Educational Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2011,2018), followed by this project. Data collection did not start until all consent from The Open University Ethics Committee had been received. The Open University Ethics Committee granted the first ethical approval in June 2018 with the code HREC/2976/Cobo-Palacios. This approval was updated after testing the tools and rehearsing the study, and after each of the changes or additions made to the methods and tools used for data collection.

The following three chapters show the results and discussion of the findings after carrying out the thematic data analysis. Specific strategies used by teachers to achieve mediation are identified, categorised and discussed in different sections. The observation, identification, analysis, and interpretation of strategies when mediating are key tasks to understanding how those strategies are performed in the online and face-to-face classrooms. The identification and analysis of strategies that appear in the data are derived from the observation of teaching practices in the classroom and critical reflections on them during the stimulated recall (SR) sessions and final interviews carried out with the four teacher participants in this study.

In light of the view on mediation taken in this study, that it connects two or more languages and cultures by bridging meaningful connections from different sides, the strategies generated from the participants' data have been classified into three groups – (1) linguistic strategies, (2) nonverbal strategies and (3) strategies related to teachers' personal experiences – for further analysis and discussion. These categories take into account not only linguistic but also cultural mediation and learning strategies, offering a wider holistic and integrative vision of mediation practices. As we will see, mediation strategies are, therefore, able to go beyond students' existing knowledge and act as a bridge between it and the target language and culture in the classroom. This bridge brings meaningful and personal information embracing cultures, languages and affect related to the agents of mediation, both teachers and students.



Teacher acknowledgement of students' responses to instances of mediation has been taken into account in every excerpt and has been analysed as an important aspect, where the teacher assesses whether the bridge has reached the students or whether another form of mediation is needed. To avoid confusion with the term 'remediation', understood in many other contexts as fixing some damage, restoring or providing a remedy, the action relevant in the context of this work – mediating a new meaning in class again – is referred to here using the hyphenated form: 're-mediation'. Students' comments, questions, or requests for reformulations guide teachers into modifying the point of connection and adding layers to produce an effective mediation. In the case of the online lessons from the data, it is specified whether teachers and students' interventions are oral (if they turned on their microphone) or written in the chat (in which case an image showing this conversation is shared).

In chapter 4, 5 and 6, an analysis of the characteristics of each strategy is provided. A selection of excerpts is presented for each strategy to provide evidence from real language and culture mediation scenarios. Since the results showed all strategies working together, each excerpt normally presents more than one strategy, although the attention of the reader is directed to one strategy at a time to be able to discuss each of them individually. Nevertheless, all strategies that appear are acknowledged and taken into account in the analysis, although in some cases they are further analysed in the respective section. For most excerpts, in the three categories of strategies (linguistic, nonverbal and personal experiences) the sequence of the order and the choice of teachers' mediatory strategies is illustrated with different circles. Each circle contains all the strategies that happened at the same time within a series of successive combinations of strategies ordered with arrows.

A table with the summary of excerpts analysed can be found in Appendix 11.<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES

The strategies discussed in this chapter use linguistic resources to present and connect a new term through modifying the language used, reformulating, elaborating, and reworking the communication so the message teachers want to use as a bridge with students is conveyed. Of the three categories of mediation that have been identified in the literature, linguistic strategies have been researched most widely (Gibbons, 2003; Stathopoulou, 2013; Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016); this is in accord with the fact that 16

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<sup>1</sup> In the digital version of this piece of research, excerpts can be accessed through direct link when clicking on the page number of the table in Appendix 11.



excerpts are discussed in this section, more than in other sections. However, the approach taken with the strategies observed and studied in this work is that they are not only communicative, but they allow teachers to connect students with new meanings.

In all the observed sessions, language teachers spent a significant amount of classroom time introducing new vocabulary and structures (nouns, verbs, clauses and verbal phrases). Teaching new vocabulary through mediation takes into consideration a move beyond the process of simply transferring meanings. Furthermore, it creates connections and meaningful links between known terms and the unknown terms to be acquired in the target language. The creation of linguistic bridges to help students interpret unknown vocabulary has been evidenced by all teachers in this study during the observed classes.

The following linguistic strategies serving as mediation have been found: (a) paraphrasing, (b) explaining, (c) exemplifying, (d) and translating. These strategies are not exclusive, and teachers use more than one strategy to ensure understanding when a single strategy has not successfully bridged a new meaning. This overlapping aspect is found in some of the following excerpts.

#### **4.1. Paraphrasing**

When paraphrasing in FL classrooms, teachers can help students come closer to a new word or phrase by using terms students might already know that can facilitate the negotiation of this new meaning. Paraphrasing has been defined as “changing the wording of a text so that it is significantly different from the original source, without changing the meaning” (Bailey, 2018, p. 46). In this study, paraphrasing as done by the teachers is accordingly defined as a restatement in other words of a new term, or simply saying with other words what an unknown concept means. Paraphrasing is defined as necessarily intralingual in this study, that is, saying with other words in Spanish (the target language) what a concept in Spanish means; interlingual ‘paraphrasing’ falls under the strategy of translation analysed in section 4.4. Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 420) emphasise that paraphrasing is an “attempt to make the meaning easier to understand” by trying to bridge this new meaning with familiar words, which ultimately facilitates the mediation of new concepts.

In the examples provided here, paraphrasing may include a whole phrase in the process or just one word. When teachers mediate through paraphrasing, they may make use of synonyms as a form of restating an idea in other words, as discussed by Bailey (2018), who included synonyms as one of the techniques for paraphrasing alongside changing word class and word order, although his focus was not mediation on new meanings by teachers.



The following five excerpts show how teachers use paraphrasing to mediate linguistic concepts.

**Excerpt 1: *Madera de actriz***

During this face-to-face session, students were practising the present subjunctive with the verbal phrase '*no es que + present subjunctive, sino + simple present*'. Students had just spent some time working in pairs and they were correcting their answers here. S2 stopped Elena to express a possible misunderstanding about the expression *madera de actriz*.

01 **Elena:** *No sepa qué ponerse. Vale, la 3, Louise, Mariángeles está aprendiendo arte*  
02 *dramático porque quiere cambiar de trabajo.*

03 **S1:** *No es porque quiere cambiar de trabajo sino...*

04 **Elena:** *No es porque quieraaaaa* (doing a loud and long A sound with her mouth) *sino*  
05 *porque tiene* (with a louder voice) *madera de actriz. ¿Bien?*

06 **S2:** *Yo no entiendo ¿madera es 'wood'?*

07 **Elena:** *Si, pero tener madera de actriz es una expresión que significa tener mucho*  
08 *talento. ¿Vale?*

09 **S2:** *Hmmm* (prolonged intonation showing sudden understanding)

10 **S3:** *Ahh* (and she starts writing something down in her notebook)

11 **SS:** (The rest of the class start making some notes too)

In this excerpt, the mediation is prompted by S2 when a problem with the vocabulary used in the exercise arose. Elena did not initially stop when the expression *madera de actriz* appeared. However, S2 was confused by the literal meaning of *madera* (wood) and instead of relying on this translation, he checked with the teacher, prompting this mediation. The teacher's first and single strategy to mediate this term was paraphrasing when she used a collocation with a word which is cognate with the original word: *tener mucho talento*. Despite having been asked about the English equivalent of one of the words in this new phrase, the teacher did not opt for a translation as a mediation strategy, but to convey its meaning with known terms in the target language. This action brought students closer to the interpretation of a new expression in Spanish because they recognised the meaning of Elena's paraphrased sentence.

The teacher saw evidence of understanding: students expressed a positive reaction towards this paraphrasing signifying the positive links reached between the unfamiliar expression and the words chosen to define it. In this first excerpt, this teacher relied solely on the use of paraphrasing to bridge connections between students' knowledge and this



unfamiliar concept. There were no more questions from the students' side, nor any further vocabulary derived from this learning opportunity, which makes this instance a short mediation not needing any more support, such as attempting the same strategy differently or using other strategies, because the mediation was successful.

### **Excerpt 2: *Carterista***

In this excerpt, Elena was on the second half of a two-hour face-to-face session with 16 students. This lesson aimed to give advice in Spanish for future situations during their year abroad. Students were working in pairs while she was walking through the class to assist them. One of the students asked her in Spanish for the meaning of *carteristas*:

01 **S1:** *¿Qué son los carteristas?*

02 **Elena:** *Los carteristas son las personas que roban las carteras, ¿recordáis qué es una carterista? La cartera es donde pones el dinero. [...]*

04 **S2:** *[...] ¿Qué es carterista?*

05 **Elena:** *Carterista es la persona que roba las carteras*

06 **S3:** *Carterista es la persona que roba*

The focus of this short intervention was to mediate the linguistic meaning of the word *carterista*, which was prompted by S1 initially. It can be seen how the teacher gave her own definition of the target word by saying with other words that this concept involves people who steal wallets with the following paraphrase: *personas que roban las carteras*. It is noticeable how the last part of this paraphrase did not change the form of the target word much, she opted to change just the root form to explain a derived form, moving from *carterista* to *cartera*. The teacher may have expected students to recognise this term, although immediately after, she tried to have students recall the latter concept. This situation created a new mediation opportunity with a different concept, *cartera*. The teacher answered her own question with simple words students probably knew *es donde pones el dinero* (line 03), making use of a paraphrasing strategy once more. The proximity of both terms (*carterista* and *cartera*) that the teacher evidenced with her intervention, tried to reduce the distance between what the students were capable of doing and what they can now do with the given support of both terms paraphrased. By supporting the unknown term '*carterista*' with a structure Elena assumed students remembered '*cartera*', she followed a ZPD approach to assist and enrich the process of mediating this new meaning. It is through questioning the proximity of both terms through paraphrasing, that Elena guided students' moves on to a potential zone of proximal development.



A few seconds later, S2 had exactly the same query and S3 replied at the same time as the teacher, which can be seen as proof of success from the previous mediation intervention. On this occasion, even when this second opportunity arose, this teacher maintained the same strategy of paraphrasing the word in Spanish to offer a definition.

Similarly to the previous excerpt, Elena relied on paraphrasing as the sole strategy to mediate, but on this occasion she used it more than once to re-mediate. The following illustration shows how this is an example of a repeated strategy where this teacher is clearly showing a preference for paraphrasing as a mediation strategy with her students in this class.



Figure 1. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 2

During the SR session, Elena was asked to comment on this moment, and she added she simply thought of giving a definition: “*simplemente pensé en definirlo. Pero no pensé nada especial*”. The teacher identified her action as a definition, although she did not comment on the language chosen to define it, which was the target language, or the way she chose the simpler words in the definition so that students could connect with them and understand it.

**Elena:** *Eh ... bueno ... si me acordé, pero de una cosa que no tiene nada que ver con la clase. Me acordé de cuando daba clase de español en Barcelona y ‘carterista’ era una de las primeras cosas que les enseñaba a los alumnos ... en el metro tienes que tener mucho cuidado porque hay carteristas ... entonces los ejemplos eran diferentes. Me acordé de eso.*

Elena shared her thoughts while mediating this concept in class and she linked it to a previous time when she mediated the term in Barcelona where she warned students to be wary of *carteristas* (pickpockets). In spite of being aware of the cultural meaning that this word entails and how students could benefit from this social clue for their year abroad, this thought was not followed in class. The unplanned and improvised nature of Elena’s mediation in class means it is sometimes inevitable that mediatory opportunities will be missed and there will be a focus on the immediately relevant situation, which was the meaning of *cartera/carterista*.



Elena did not combine the strategy of paraphrasing with the use of a personal experience which could have been a bridge to mediate cultural aspects of this concept too, perhaps because it was the end of the class and there was not enough time or because she was not aware of her experience being a valuable resource as mediation. The objective of this mediation was to address the meaning of two unknown concepts and Elena's use of paraphrasing proved to be enough for students to reach the meaning.

### Excerpt 3: *Tergiversar*

Carmen was teaching an online class about oral and written skills in the last session she taught that was observed for this study. She planned to show her seven students a text from an old exam paper to work on ways to paraphrase what has been said. The objective of this activity was to change what the text said to explain it with their own words and practise the indirect style when writing in Spanish. A student (S1) offered to read it out loud in Spanish.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide titled "Ejemplos de Discurso Indirecto" is displayed. The slide contains a question: "¿Cómo se podría cambiar la siguiente cita parafraseando lo que dice el alcalde?" and a paragraph of text. A green arrow points to the first sentence of the paragraph. On the right, the Zoom interface shows a list of participants (7) and a chat window with three messages.

**Ejemplos de Discurso Indirecto**

¿Cómo se podría cambiar la siguiente cita parafraseando lo que dice el alcalde?

Pero el proyecto cuenta con el visto bueno de las administraciones. "Se están tergiversando los datos sobre el Plan Parcial de Valdevaqueros, ya que se trata de una actuación urbanística de carácter moderno, actual y en la línea de un desarrollo blando e integrado en el medio físico", defiende el alcalde, Juan Andrés Gil. Según Gil, "el proyecto contempla una muy baja densidad de construcción, ya que, de los más de 700.000 metros cuadrados de superficie, solo podrán urbanizarse unos 84.000". Además, el proyecto solo contempla construcciones de bajo y una planta en las viviendas y de bajo y dos alturas en las plazas hoteleras. Gil se siente víctima de "una campaña de desprestigio".

**Chat 73 (Everyone)**

- No quiero que chatees tanto
- Quiero que te cepilles los dientes
- p. 97 Libro 2

Figure 2. Exercise followed by Carmen in excerpt 3

- 01 S1: *Pero el proyecto cuenta con el visto bueno de las administraciones.*
- 02 *"Se están tergi, tergiversaaando los datos sobre el Plan Parcial ..."* (She reads
- 03 the full text on the slide)



04 **Carmen:** *Bien, tergiversar es alterar. Están alterando los datos, confundiendo los*  
05 *datos que estoy yo dando, muy bien. Entonces aquí tenemos la cita de Gil. Se*  
06 *están tergiversando los datos ... etc. Muy bien, entonces ¿cómo podríamos decir*  
07 *de otra forma lo que dijo el alcalde? ¿Cómo podríamos cambiar un poco este*  
08 *texto, pero para de alguna manera dejar claro lo que dijo?*

09 **S1:** (She raises her hand in the participants window)

10 **Carmen:** *Si, Pamela, adelante*

11 **S1:** *No estoy muy segura, pero creo que está diciendo que*  
12 *los ... los ... administraciones están ahm ... ay a ver ... ay no, están cambiando*  
13 *los ... no, no creo, lo siento. No, perdona no lo sé. Perdona.*

14 **Carmen:** *No, no pasa nada. Puedes decir algo como ahí tienes, están*  
15 *cambiando la información, están alterando la información para*  
16 *desprestigiar este desarrollo urbanístico, ¿por qué? Y él explica porque es*  
17 *algo positivo, no es algo negativo como la gente dice. ¿Por qué? porque el*  
18 *alcalde de alguna manera está promoviendo la construcción de este centro*  
19 *turístico.*

The context of this excerpt consists of an activity whose aim is to paraphrase the quotes said by someone else in a text. Within this exercise of paraphrasing, the teacher is mediating the meaning of a word (*tergiversando*, on the second line in the text shown in Figure 2), also choosing the strategy of paraphrasing. Carmen noticed how S1 had some difficulties pronouncing the word *tergiversando* and the first thing she pointed out when giving feedback after the reading of this passage was the meaning of *tergiversar*. Carmen identified this moment as a mediation opportunity for an unfamiliar term. The strategy this participant used to teach this new term was to say it with other words, providing known synonyms to students (*alterar* and *confundir*). Carmen created a bridge, offering a synonym that linked words the students might understand with the unfamiliar term *tergiversar* used in the context of the sentence that triggers this new concept: *se están alterando los datos, confundiendo los datos* (line 04).

The focus of this mediation was facilitating the linguistic meaning of *tergiversar*. S1's response did not include the teacher's synonyms, but she incorporated a different word as can be seen when she uses *cambiando* (line 12) instead of *tergiversando*, following the example of paraphrasing that had been given. S1's ability to paraphrase can be seen as proof of the success of this mediation since the teacher offered two familiar terms that allowed the student to link the meaning of this word with *cambiar*. However, after having diffidently attempted to rephrase the text towards the end of the excerpt, S1 showed some uncertainty, apologising: *no, no creo, lo siento. No, perdona no lo sé. Perdona*. The teacher



seems to have interpreted this hesitation as a call for re-mediation to successfully facilitate the negotiation of *tergiversar* again.

This re-mediation was prompted by the student who partly showed her understanding of the word by choosing one of the paraphrased words the teacher shared during the first strategy, *están cambiando* (line 12). This collaboration from the student during the mediation process was key to direct the teacher into following the steps needed to create connections with the meaning of this new word. Carmen reassured S1 by repeating the synonyms used in her paraphrase *están cambiando la información* and she added one more paraphrase *están alterando la información*.

This linguistic mediation happened through paraphrasing, which according to its definition in this thesis is intralingual; it is noticeable how the whole intervention happened in the target language, just like with what Elena did in the previous two excerpts.

In this excerpt, the teacher did not use multiple strategies but two different attempts at paraphrasing which interconnected S1's known vocabulary with *tergiversar* and allowed her to effectively access the meaning of this new word and paraphrase it herself. The final illustration (Figure 3) captures the two instances of mediation using one strategy repeatedly during this intervention.

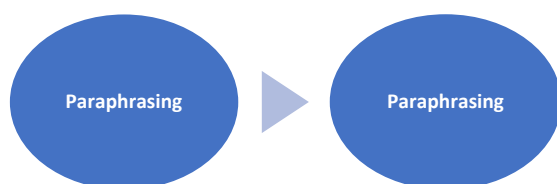


Figure 3. Strategies used by Carmen in excerpt 3

Up to this point, teachers have been seen using one single strategy to mediate a concept; however, except unlike the first excerpt, which was shorter and simpler, the other two excerpts (excerpts 2 and 3) show teachers repeating the chosen strategy two or three times with different concepts surrounding the initial unknown term as an attempt to re-mediate until the meaning was reached by students. These excerpts have shown examples where paraphrase was the only strategy used by teachers, but paraphrase also occurs in combination with other forms of mediation, and the following excerpts reflect this.

#### **Excerpt 4: *Con tal que***

In the following excerpt, Diana was observed in her first online session recorded with ten students. It is important to notice that the number of students in online sessions varied at times since having internet connections problems or other technical issues could result in seeing less students on the screen until they fixed such problem. The aim of her session



was to work on the imperfect subjunctive. In this activity, students had to read the sentence and choose the right verb from the two options given. Diana was trying to explain an expression in Spanish which implies the desired result (*con tal que*) which is followed by the present subjunctive, when the student who read that sentence asked her twice about its meaning.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting window. On the left, a slide titled "2.2 ¿presente o pasado?" lists eight sentences in Spanish, each followed by two verb options in parentheses. A red box highlights the options for sentences 1 through 4. On the right, the Zoom interface shows a list of participants (9 total) and a chat window with several messages.

**Slide Content:**

2.2 ¿presente o pasado?

1. Mi madre me sugiere que (limpie/limpiara) la cocina.
2. Era imposible que Paula (reciba/recibiera) buenas notas.
3. La maestra quería que yo (haga/hiciera) la tarea.
4. Pepita me llamó para que yo (devuelva/devolviera) la película.
5. Iré al cine con Carlos con tal que me (invite/invitara).
6. ¡Corran a clase antes de que (lleguen/llegaran) tarde!
7. Esperaba que Emilia (vaya/fuera) de compras.
8. Clara me pidió que le (dé/diera) mi libro.

**Options for sentences 1-4 (highlighted in red box):**

1. limpie
2. recibiera
3. hiciera
4. devolviera

**Options for sentences 5-8:**

5. invite
6. lleguen
7. fuera

**Zoom Interface:**

- Hosts (1):** [Name]
- Presenters (0):**
- Participants (9):** [List of 9 names]
- Chat (Everyone):**
  - [Name]: Ciarán
  - [Name]: Key-ron'
  - [Name]: audio set up
  - [Name]: sentar sentir
  - [Name]: provided that

Figure 4. Exercise followed by Diana in excerpt 4

01 **S1:** Con el 5 ¿se puede decir también 'si Carlos me invitara al cine iré con él'? O

02 sea, ¿podemos usar también 'invitara'? ¿'Si Carlos me invitara iré con él'?

03 **Diana:** Si, yo, eh tú me lo estás diciendo eh, Bob, tú me lo estás diciendo. 'Iré al

04 cine con Carlos siii me invitara'

05 **S1:** ¿qué quiere decir?

06 **Diana:** Pero con tal ... que me invite ¿ya?

07 **S1:** ajah

08 **Diana:** Es una expresión totalmente diferente. Solo iré ya, si me invita iré. Es que

09 'con tal que me invite' es él me tiene que invitar, sino no voy. 'Si me invitara' es a lo

10 mejor existe la posibilidad de que me invite. 'Si me invitara', si hubiera la posibilidad

11 de que me invitara, pero tú mismo me has dado la respuesta cuando has dicho si,

12 necesitas otra frase ahí, si me invitara. Iré al cine con Carlos si me invitara



13 **S1:** *¿Y qué quiere decir? Perdona estoy un poco flojo aquí, que quiere decir 'con tal*  
14 *que', es que no sigo realmente la expresión 'con tal que'.*

15 **Diana:** *Me tiene que invitar para que yo vaya, ¿ya? 'Con tal que' es igual que decir*  
16 *iré al cine con Carlos, pero me tiene que invitar. Eso es, 'con tal que', no sé cómo*  
17 *en un sitio como linguee, no sé cómo en un sitio como linguee traducirían la*  
18 *expresión 'con tal que', es una expresión un poco coloquial, ¿eh? a ver linguee, estoy*  
19 *buscándolo ¿ah? pero es muchísimo más eh, umm, en linguee la traduce como 'for*  
20 *the sake of' entonces puedes notar que es como, pero aquí no se puede traducir*  
21 *por 'the sake of' pero aquí puedes notar que es una expresión mucho más fuerte que*  
22 *'if', 'if' es una condición. 'Con tal que' es mucho más una asección, ¿ya? Es la única*  
23 *manera en que yo voy a ir al cine es si Carlos me invita ¿eh? Es verdad, es una*  
24 *expresión bastante difícil de traducir al inglés, pero la diferencia entre 'con tal que' y*  
25 *'si' es que 'si' es una posibilidad y 'con tal que' es mucho más una asección.*

26 **S2:** *'Provided that' (written message in the chat).*

27 **Diana:** *Mira Peter, 'provided that', ¿eso es! es not 'if' es 'provided that', exactamente*  
28 *Kelly muchas gracias. ¿Comprendes ahora Peter?*

29 **S1:** *Sí*

30 **Diana:** *O sea, que si usas 'si' es una posibilidad, si usas 'con tal que' es 'provided*  
31 *that', es que es eso. Muchas gracias, Kelly, no me salía*

32 **S1:** *Muchas gracias, Diana, y muchas gracias, Kelly*

Diana aimed at helping S1 interpreting the meaning of a conjunctive phrase in Spanish (*con tal que*) in this example. S1 prompted the initiation of this mediation when he turned his microphone on and asked *¿qué quiere decir?* (line 05). Diana's first attempt to bring the student closer to this new meaning was by employing paraphrasing as a strategy, to say it with other words students might know. Following S1's suggestion of replacing this new expression *con tal que* with *si*, Diana paraphrased the whole sentence with *si me invita iré* (line 08), *él me tiene que invitar, sino no voy* (line 09) and *iré al cine con Carlos si me invitara* (line 12). Not only paraphrasing, but some explanations followed this mediation process when the teacher said *'si me invitara es: a lo mejor existe la posibilidad de que me invite. Si me invitara, si hubiera la posibilidad de que me invitara, pero tú mismo me has dado la respuesta cuando has dicho si, necesitas otra frase ahí, si me invitara'* (lines 9-12). This first attempt at helping S1 achieve an understanding of this new concept through paraphrasing and explanations was centred around the use of *si* as *con tal que*. However, despite this being S1's point on his previous intervention, he did not share positive feedback that indicated successfulness of the mediation, and he asked about the meaning of this



expression again by asking *¿y qué quiere decir?* in line 13. This students' intervention evidences an unsuccessful attempt paraphrasing as mediation. This is an example of how multiple strategies are used to re-mediate this intervention.

Immediately after S1 prompted Diana with his fourth intervention, and in spite of not having been successful with paraphrasing, Diana re-attempted the mediation by a different form of paraphrasing similar words S1 may have in his vocabulary repertoire: *me tiene que invitar para que yo vaya* (line 15) and *iré al cine con Carlos, pero me tiene que invitar* (line 16). A short explanation was interposed with a remark on the informal register *es una expresión un poco coloquial* (line 18) and a final translation into English (see section 4.4 for translation as a mediation strategy) concluded this second attempt. Diana tried to find a translation into English with the aid of an online website, as a third strategy to come across this new meaning: *en lingüee la traduce como 'for the sake of'* (line 19). However, this third strategy was not the last as she builds more complete paraphrasing afterwards. Diana expressed how she thought the meaning found in English was not enough and it did not encompass the full context of what it meant in Spanish *pero aquí no se puede traducir por 'the sake of', pero aquí puedes notar que es una expresión mucho más fuerte que 'if', 'if' es una condición* (line 21). This teacher's reflection shared in class about her unsuccessful use of translation as mediation helped her to find other strategies to build mediation.

The use of paraphrasing with consecutive explanations was used by this teacher repeatedly, relying on this combination of strategies as successful mediation. This structure was used to deal with problems in the first attempt, showing that monitoring what happens in class and attempting at learning opportunities with a mediation strategy (or strategies) is part of the mediational work being done. One last use of paraphrasing *la única manera en que yo voy a ir al cine es si Carlos me invita* (line 23) and an explanation was performed that included repetition of information: *la diferencia entre 'con tal que' y 'si' es que 'si' es una posibilidad y 'con tal que' es mucho más una aseveración* (lines 24-25).

Another student (S2) intervened in the chat by offering the written direct translation into English ('provided that'), which was believed to be the best way to interpret this concept as the teacher said it was exactly that what she was looking for. Following the mediating strategies from the teacher, S2 mediated for the teacher with a different translation than the one offered earlier. The teacher praised S2's mediation and relied strongly on this last strategy to finally mediate the meaning of *con tal que*. Having such comment coming from a student can be seen as a sign of the success of the previous meditation attempts that Diana had just performed.



With the exception of the use of translations (line 20 and 26), the target language was kept during this whole episode. The teacher applied translation when she thought paraphrasing was not enough, although she revealed in the target language how the first translation needed further comment. The interlingual came into action again at the end from S2's intervention, which was reinforced by the teacher who acknowledged this translation was exactly what this new term means, thinking her previous strategies had perhaps failed to bridge the concept. S2's contribution alongside S1's questions to prompt re-mediation and a final confirmation of S1's understanding make this example a highly collaborative instance of mediation, where meaning was co-created between students and the teacher.

Combining paraphrasing among the other strategies made the creation of meaningful links for S1 possible. The use of paraphrasing in this example was in constant interweave with the use of explanations and translations, designing its own specific composition in terms of mediation strategies as represented in the following figure.

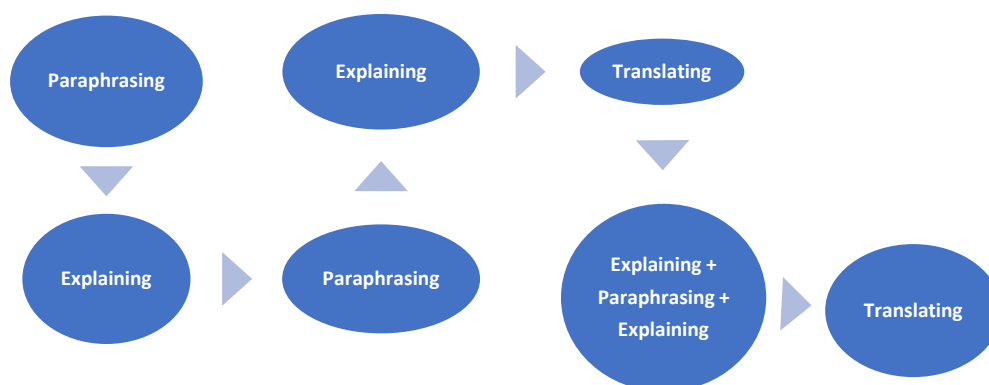


Figure 5. Strategies used by Diana in excerpt 4

In this excerpt, the teacher used a combination of strategies, sometimes repeating the same one when re-mediating and other times using strategies at the same time in a simultaneous fashion.

As the excerpts in this section show, teachers perform the strategy of paraphrasing to mediate new concepts when they perceive a lack of understanding of a term (excerpts 2 and 4) or when students ask about an unfamiliar term in the classroom: *qué es X?* (excerpts 1 and 2), *qué quiere decir* (excerpt 4) or '*X* [word in Spanish] *es* *Y* [word in English]?' (excerpt 1). Students prompt teachers to initiate a mediation process to connect the meaning of a new word with other words (paraphrases) that students might know, to help them interpret this journey from the known to the unknown in a meaningful way. Therefore, teachers mediate when they perceive there is a need for mediation.



This strategy can lead to further discussions and expand students' vocabulary at the same time due to the nature of paraphrasing, which in most cases recorded here included the use of more than one term. Excerpts 1-4 introduced the following terms: *cambiar*, *alterar* and *confundir* (excerpt 3), *si me invita* and *me tiene que invitar* (excerpt 4) and *carterista* and *cartera* (excerpt 2). The paraphrasing in excerpt 1 relied heavily on a single phrase, *tener mucho talento*, in an example which solely used paraphrasing strategies.

The intermediate level of Spanish of their students made it possible for teachers to use other connected terms already existing in their word banks or terms that were easily accessible, such as cognates. However, there is a risk with choosing paraphrasing for mediation, since there is no guarantee all students possess the knowledge of the terms used in the paraphrase, although this may present another learning opportunity to expand their vocabulary and link all these words to a close semantic group relationship where the unknown term belongs.

The purpose of these four instances of mediation through paraphrasing focused on linguistic aspects, facilitating the meaning of nouns (*carterista* and *cartera*), idiomatic expressions (*madera de actriz*), verbs (*tergiversar*) and a conjunctive phrase (*con tal que*). Despite not emphasising or concentrating on cultural aspects during these mediations, all of them were contextualised and situated in possible and realistic environments where this new vocabulary would be needed. The assiduousness in using this strategy among three out of the four participants might be an indicator of teachers' preferences for intralingual mediation or perhaps previous training on making sure there is maximum exposure to the target language in class, which was important in the communicative method.

Ohta (2000) argues that students' feedback and private speech after teachers used recasts could be proof of the teachers' mediations having been successful. Sometimes, there was evidence of students' confusion with the new term (excerpt 4) or when they decided it was not enough, which made teachers repeat the use of paraphrasing as a second chance of mediation. Paraphrasing was also seen combined with other strategies, such as explanations, a strategy that is analysed in the following subsection.

Reformulating new information through paraphrasing has also been studied as a scaffolding move, part of the mediation strategies of teachers (Gibbons, 2003; Schwartz and Gorbatt, 2017). Here it has been corroborated as a mediation strategy that teachers use in class.

## **4.2. Explaining**

The use of explanations as mediation is the next strategy identified to help teachers connect new vocabulary to learners. An explanation can act as mediation when it is used to bridge



meaningful connections from an unfamiliar term to students' realities. Descriptions of linguistic or/and cultural aspects relating to this new term, clarifications, remarks, context information and annotations are included within this category of explanations. These explanations can also be seen as 'complex definitions', according to Richards and Schmidt (2010). As opposed to paraphrasing, explanations involve further details and a more complete answer in one or more sentences. The language used to explain a term as mediation in the observed classrooms was the target language, although these explanations could be provided in the source language or other languages shared in the classroom.

Two illustrative examples that were found of teachers mediating vocabulary through the use of explanations are provided hereunder.

### **Excerpt 5: *Porro***

During this face-to-face session, Fernando was correcting an exercise where students had to read statements about Spanish young people and say whether they thought they were true or false. At the end of the exercise, he decided to ask about difficult vocabulary and S1 asked about a word.

01 **Fernando:** *¿Hay alguna palabra difícil aparte de ... hemos visto estas dos, tenemos*

02 *'encerrarse' que es cuando you lock yourself behind doors y 'descender' to go down?*

03 **S1:** *¿El porro?*

04 **Fernando:** *'Porro' es un tipo de droga en España, creo que el equivalente sería 'joint', ¿de*  
05 *acuerdo?*

06 **S1:** ohh (she nods and write something down in her notebook)

07 **Fernando:** *Creo que es un tipo de droga, ¿sí? Es una expresión coloquial, no creo que sea*

08 *el nombre científico esto ha, ha* (he laughed) *¿Y última pregunta, hay alguno de estos*

09 *datos que sería muy diferente en Inglaterra? ...*

In this excerpt, S1 prompted the teacher with a vocabulary question following his question on difficult words. The linguistic negotiation of the word *porro* started with a short explanation that it is *un tipo de droga* (line 04). The teacher chose a general comment using a hypernym 'drug' to explain what this unfamiliar word was, giving information about this concept which did not limit its meaning but gave a broad idea of the type of meaning they were creating.

Fernando combined this strategy with others, and he chose to offer a translation following his short explanation (line 04). The association of the explanation *tipo de droga* with the



translation 'joint' seemed enough for S1 to have crossed the bridge and reached a successful understanding of this term. S1's feedback was a clear interjection revealing her acknowledgement and comprehension of Fernando's attempts at negotiating this new meaning. After a few seconds, Fernando added one last comment explaining the pragmatic side of this word (line 07) when he remarked on the informal register of this term.

There was no immediate response from any student after this last explanation, and he moved on to a different topic. Therefore, this example offered an interplay of explanations and a translation, with one student's response after the first two strategies which might have indicated to Fernando that the mediation had been successful, despite then using explanation to negotiate one more aspect of the term.



Figure 6. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 5

### Excerpt 6: *Botellón*

In this example, Fernando was observed in a face-to-face lesson whose objective was the practice of verbal periphrases. At this point, he was checking students' answers to an exercise where they had to say whether they agreed with a set of statements or not. There were only three students that day, and Fernando took the time to expand on the vocabulary related to the exercise. On this occasion, the teacher prompted a student to initiate a mediation process to explain what *botellón* is, which he followed by adding further explanations and remarks.

01 **Fernando:** *¿qué piensas de la D?* (question d)

02 **S1:** *Pienso que cada vez más los jóvenes piensan que para pasarlo bien necesitan*  
 03 *el alcohol en las fiestas, pero también pienso que hay jóvenes que no gustan, o le*  
 04 *gustan el alcohol*

05 **Fernando:** *De acuerdo, depende de la persona, ¿no? ¿Conoces la expresión*  
 06 *botellón?*

07 **S1:** *Sí*

08 **Fernando:** *Vosotras no, ¿no?*

09 **SS:** *No*



10 **Fernando:** *¿Puedes explicar a Part 2 (he divided the class in two groups: Part 1*  
11 *and Part 2) qué es el botellón? (and he writes botellón on the board)*

12 **S1:** *El botellón es como una fiesta en España donde los jóvenes van a la calle*  
13 *para ... es como binge drinking*

14 **Fernando:** *Sí, la gente lo que hace es beber en público, ¿sí? Sobre todo la gente*  
15 *joven.*

16 **S1:** *Pero a los antiguos no les gusta nada*

17 **Fernando:** *¿A los antiguos?*

18 **S1:** *The ... Sorry, las personas mayores*

19 **Fernando:** *Ah, sí, creo que, a partir de cierta edad, cuando tienes familia e hijos no*  
20 *te gusta mucho, pero vais a ver que en España beber en público no está tan mal*  
21 *considerado como en otros países y sobre todo los universitarios a veces*  
22 *se juntan en la calle para beber.*

23 **S2:** *Hmmm*

24 **Fernando:** *Compran unas botellas y se ponen a beber en la calle, en lugares*  
25 *públicos.*

26 **S3:** *(Nodding)*

27 **Fernando:** *Cada vez está más prohibido, cuando yo era joven había más porque*  
28 *no estaba regulado, pero creo que ahora hay muchas ciudades que pueden poner*  
29 *fine. ¿'Fine' es...? 'Multa' (and he writes it on the board).*

The objective of this mediation was to help students interpret the concept *botellón* linguistically and culturally. The teacher identified a mediation opportunity when this term arose, and he directly asked S1 to explain it to the rest of the class.

Fernando commented about the reason why he had asked the student to initiate this mediation by herself, during the SR session.

**Fernando:** *Sé que S1 ha hecho A level en español y sé que siempre en los libros está el botellón. Y ellas, como han empezado a ver español en la universidad, pues no tenían ni idea. Y como sé que a S1 le gusta mucho explicar, dije pues mira. Y sí, también lo típico que comentamos la semana pasada, que sean conscientes de las diferencias culturales.*

In his last comment here, Fernando talked about how the support from S1 meant a connection with known realities, since she knew more than the rest about these social practices in Spain. He also showed his awareness of the importance of mediating cultural



aspects as well as linguistics, which clearly matched his classroom actions in this excerpt with explanations on how *botellón* is perceived. This shows how linguistic strategies can be used to mediate not only language but also culture. Fernando's pedagogical approach highlights the importance of being aware of such cultural differences and act as an intercultural mediator exploring and negotiating the boundaries in which this previously unknown meaning would place itself. Not only Fernando acted as intercultural mediator in this intervention, but he also encouraged S1 to interpret the meaning of such practice 'botellón'. The student engaged in an analysis of the meaning she constructed according to her cultural framings and provided the rest of the class with an explanation of this phenomenon.

Once the student tried to bridge her understanding of *botellón* to the rest of the class through an explanation in Spanish, which was followed by an English translation, the teacher initiated his own mediation to assist her intervention. S1's decision to stop the short explanation she had started to offer a translation into English may have been the motive for Fernando taking over to continue explaining this term in Spanish, as the translation could create misunderstandings.

The first strategy used by Fernando was to paraphrase this word with a simple sentence describing what *botellón* consists of: *la gente lo que hace es beber en público*. By defining *botellón* with words that were more familiar to students so they could connect their knowledge to this new term, a linguistic mediation was performed, followed by cultural explanations triggered by S1's recurrent participation.

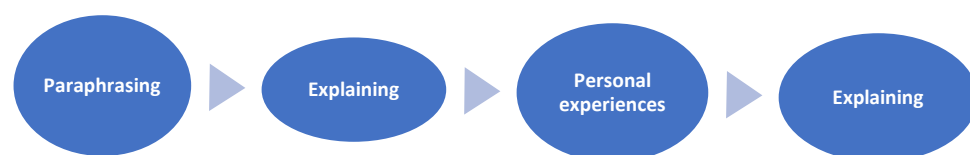
S1 continued collaborating in the creation of this meaning with new input containing an explanation of the age of people who normally do this activity (line 16). S1's remark *a los antiguos no les gusta nada* was not clear and required further explanation by the teacher, not only lexically – S1 self-corrected to *las personas mayores* (line 18) – but also culturally. The second strategy used by Fernando was the use of explanations as a way to elaborate on the reasons why older people do not enjoy this activity as much (line 19) and to mediate the idea of how this *botellón* is socially acceptable and carried out (line 20-22). Assisting with possible misunderstandings caused by difference was one more characteristic of Fernando's position as an intercultural mediator in this excerpt.

S2's short comment in line 23 can be seen as a proof of having reached the meaning of this concept that Fernando just mediated through explanations. Fernando added one more explanation on the practical aspects on this activity (line 24), which elicited S3 nonverbal response of nodding to indicate understanding.



In Fernando's last comment, he shifted to his personal experiences as a mediation strategy to continue facilitating this new meaning by sharing the state of his identity as a university student (line 27). He concluded with a final explanation on the possibility of getting a fine nowadays. The layering of paraphrasing, explanations and personal experiences form the structure of this instance of mediation that reached all students in the class.

The teacher is seen implicitly mediating intralingually on how to mediate in this excerpt. Fernando encouraged S1 to use an explanation as an implicit strategy to mediate. He did not only mediate how to mediate with his initial question *¿puedes explicar?* (line 10) **prompting scaffolding to help mediation take place at the learner's pace depending on their previous knowledge.** Fernando also used explanations, embedding personal experiences in them, to make a better understanding of this new vocabulary possible.



*Figure 7. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 6*

Both of the examples of explaining as mediation in this subsection show the ability of explanations to be used as cultural activators, although it is in excerpt 6 where explanations revolve more clearly around cultural behaviours and expectations. Unlike the paraphrasing examples in section 4.1, which dealt with the more structural aspect of language and did not mediate cultural aspects, the explanations here can be seen to offer a more holistic view of the new meaning that is created. This explaining strategy has been used in conjunction with other strategies, as a complement to paraphrasing, personal experiences, or translation (more extensively analysed in other sections), and it shares the intralingual pattern of paraphrasing. The success of this strategy will be corroborated in the following examples, where explaining is used in combination with other linguistic and non-linguistic strategies.

### **4.3. Exemplifying**

Teachers were recorded using examples while trying to facilitate the interpretation of new meanings for students. Exemplifying implies providing an example to illustrate a new concept or idea or to show how an idea can be applied using examples that can be recognised by students. Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 110) state that "suitable examples can strengthen the argument, and they can also help the reader to understand a point". The use of illustrative examples as a strategy to mediating new concepts and helping students



facilitate their understanding was found in the data in conjunction with other strategies, using multilayering. Examples served as concrete cases in real situations intended to make students see the meaning of a new word more clearly. Students may already know the meaning of the term in their own languages and these examples make them aware of the connections that are necessary to reach an understanding of the concept in Spanish.

In using examples in this way, teachers expect students to connect them with situations where the unknown term is used to bridge the gap of meaning-making. Through exemplifying, teachers can not only simplify meaning but, like with the previous two strategies, the new meaning is amplified by introducing more vocabulary and offering complementary new information that adds to the whole concept of the target term. The following four cases show how teachers used words related to the main concept in their examples.

### **Excerpt 7: *Recados***

The first lesson of Diana's that was observed included practising the imperfect subjunctive. This online session had nine students, and since Diana set an activity in breakout rooms in pairs just a few minutes before the excerpt presented here, she had stayed in the main room with the ninth student so they could have a partner. It was this same student (S1) that Diana chose as a volunteer to do the following activity in class, once everyone was back from the breakout rooms where they had been practising the imperfect subjunctive. The context of this exercise was a conversation between a granddaughter and her grandmother about some errands that need to be run.

01 **Diana:** *Lo que tenéis que hacer como os he dicho es exponeros al imperfecto tanto como*  
02 *podáis, haced montones de ejercicios que hay en el internet y cuanto más os suene más*  
03 *fácil es para vosotros. Bueno a ver, otro ejemplo, "Los recados. Rosario, 80 años, tiene hoy*  
04 *un resfriado y le pide a su nieta Lucia, 18, que le haga los recados", ¿ah? Los recados es*  
05 *que vaya a la tienda a comprarle el pan, a comprarle leche, ¿ya? "Cuando Lucia regresa*  
06 *parece que no ha hecho esos recados exactamente como su abuela le pidió. Practica el*  
07 *imperfecto de subjuntivo, siguiendo el modelo."* [...]

08 **Diana:** [...] *A ver Lucia, ¿me has hecho bien todos los recados?*

09 **S1:** *Bueno abuela, he comprado leche entera*

10 **Diana:** *¡Pero si yo quería que compraras leche desnatada!*

11 **S1:** *Perdona, es que no había*

12 **Diana:** *Si, podéis elegir, muy bien, muy bien, Charlotte, podéis elegir entre pero si ...*



## 4.1 LOS RECADOS

Rosario (80 años) tiene hoy un resfriado y le pide a su nieta Lucía (18 años) que le haga unos recados. Pero cuando Lucía regresa, parece que no ha hecho esos recados exactamente como su abuela le pidió. Practica el imperfecto de subjuntivo siguiendo el modelo:

**Rosario:** A ver, Lucía, ¿me has hecho bien todos los recados?


**Lucía:** Bueno, abuela, he comprado leche entera.

**Rosario:** ¡Pero si yo quería que compraras leche desnatada!

¡Pero yo te pedí que compraras leche desnatada!

¡Pero yo te dije que compraras leche desnatada!

**Lucía:** Perdona, es que no había.  
Es que me he equivocado.  
Es que me he olvidado.



Attendees (10)

▼ Hosts (1)

▶ Presenters (0)

▼ Participants (9)

Chat (Everyone)

Figure 8. Exercise followed by Diana in excerpt 7

During the explanation of this exercise, Diana was reading the first sentence on the slide when she stopped after the word *recados*. There was no prompting from students, but the teacher took time to mediate this word, perhaps because it was the first time they saw it in class, and she had some doubts about how many students would recognise its meaning. For this reason, she gave an example of what *recados* are (line 05). She started her sentence by saying *los recados es*, which may look as if she was ready to give an explanation, paraphrase or translation. However, she directly offered two examples of errands: *que vaya a la tienda a comprarle el pan* and *a comprarle leche*.

The teacher chose the words *pan* (bread) and *leche* (milk) as errands easy enough to be understood by students, even if she kept to the target language when negotiating the term *recados*. The second example, *comprarle leche*, was supported visually by the example on the slide, which they went on to practise right after she finished reading the instructions. The focus of this mediation was linguistic, bringing the meaning of the noun *recado* closer to students, with no cultural remarks. There were no cameras activated, and no feedback from students to be able to definitely state that this mediation was a success. However, once they started practising the activity, students seemed to understand the gist of it and there were no questions about the meaning of this new term. On this occasion, the



mediation process included one single strategy – exemplifying – and it was delivered intralingually (in Spanish).

### **Excerpt 8: *Manías***

Elena was being observed in a face-to-face class. She was checking that students understood the meaning of the word *manía*, which appeared in a text that students had to read for homework. The clarification of this term was needed for the following exercise in which she wanted them to write about their own *manías*. After asking the class, in the target language, if anybody knew what a *manía* was, she got a quick answer with a direct translation into English from a student. Elena elaborated on this intervention offering exemplification to guide students through situations they might know and link it to the full meaning of this new word.

01 **Elena:** *Una de ellas es leer un texto que está en el dossier y escribir algunas*

02 *pequeñas manías en un Google doc, ¿vale? ¿Alguien sabe lo que es una mania?*

03 Some of you haven't read the text yet, have you?

04 **S1:** (He shakes his head)

05 **S2:** Is it a manual?

06 **S3:** Manual? (S3 was looking surprised)

07 **Elena:** *No, no.*

08 **SS:** *Hahaha* (they laugh)

09 **Elena:** *Una manía, venga las personas que sí habéis leído el texto, ¿qué es una*  
10 *manía?*

11 **S4:** A habit

12 **Elena:** *Como un habit, ¿no?*

13 **SS:** *Sí*

14 **Elena:** *Pero negativo ¿no? Estos habits que tú tienes, bad habits ... bueno*

15 *negativos ... no siempre son negativos, pero normalmente tienen una connotación*

16 *negativa. Por ejemplo, ¿qué manías tienen las personas? Pues hay personas que*

17 *tienen la manía de cuando salen de casa tienen que [mirar en el móvil, ¡ay! en el*

18 *bolso, si tienen las llaves, el móvil, etcétera ((she is moving her hands pretending*

19 *she is wearing a shoulder bag and she is looking for objects inside it))]*

20 **S5:** *Ok*

21 **S6:** *Hmmm*



22 **S7**: (He nods)

23 **SS**: (Looking at her paying attention)

24 **Elena**: *Eso es una manía que tú haces siempre o ... cada persona tiene manías*  
25 *diferentes o ... a ver si se me ocurre ... creo que he visto una de una persona que dice*  
26 *que [siempre que sube las escaleras ((making a gesture with her right hand as if*  
27 *going up some steps))] [tiene que contar interiormente ((gesture with her right hand*  
28 *near her right temple pointing with her finger to her head and moving the hand in*  
29 *circles))]* [uno, dos, tres, cuatro (she moves her legs and feet to make steps at every  
30 number she says))]

31 **S8**: What? Hahaha

32 **S2**: That's ... (inaudible word which may be 'mad')

33 **S1**: *Hahaha* (they laugh)

34 **S9**: So, is it a habit or a quirk?

35 **S2**: *Hmmm*

36 **Elena**: *Yo creo que un poco las dos, sí, es como negativo. Entonces una de las*  
37 *cosas que tenéis que hacer es leer el texto, ¿de acuerdo? y escribir en el Google*  
38 *doc las manías que tenéis, ¿de acuerdo?*

The teacher's objective in this mediation instance was to help students create connections with the term *manía* to understand what it means linguistically. In this case, the mediation was identified by the teacher, who identified a possible linguistic incomprehension and decided to pause and reflect on that word. As was seen in excerpt 6, teachers often ask students to help interpret the meaning of new vocabulary; in this case, the teacher received a direct translation from S4 after directing her question generally to the whole class. Despite having just provided aid in English with this new term's translation and confirming this meaning with the rest of the class (line 13), the teacher problematised this translation as it does not capture the whole meaning of the word here (again, similar to excerpt 6). Elena considered more and specific threads needed to be created to go deeper into what *manía* meant, and following the translation initiated by the student and confirmed by her, she added an explanation about the negative connotations this term carries: *pero negativo, normalmente tienen una connotación negativa*. To solve the problem of the first meaning-making strategy through translation by students, she proceeded with the use of exemplification that complemented the previous remarks (lines 14-16).

The main strategy the teacher followed here is to offer examples, collocations of different types where the new concept *manía* could fit. With the two examples – *personas que*

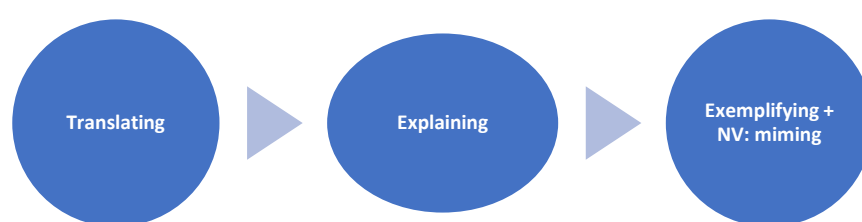


*cuando salen de casa tienen que mirar en el bolso si tienen las llaves o el móvil and persona que sube las escaleras y tiene que contar interiormente 1, 2, 3, 4* – Elena was trying to show real situations which the students might feel familiar with, and link the meaning of *manía* with specific contexts while building on the prior strategies of explaining and translating.

The first example about checking for keys and so on, which was accompanied by her miming the actions, elicited students' positive feedback, evidencing the success of this intervention. The second example about counting the steps was equally performed with nonverbal elements, but students found that example funnier and laughter was their reaction. However, the fact that the second example contributed to a different aspect of the meaning of *manía* encouraged S9 to contribute with a different and closer translation, 'quirk' (line 34). Both examples show the meaning of this unknown word; the mediation is done by providing those examples simultaneously with NVC, preceded by a translation and explanation.

As with the other excerpts of exemplification, the language used in this intervention was Spanish, except in line 03, where the teacher wanted to make sure students understood she knew not everyone had read the text.

The fact that nine students participated in this negotiation of meaning makes this example highly collaborative, involving the whole class in making meaningful connections with other words and examples to interpret *manía*. The layering of strategies, and how one influenced the next, is a central feature of how teachers mediate in the classroom, especially with exemplifying, as the context that is built up prior to the example is key.



*Figure 9. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 8*

The teacher's reflection during the SR session supports the idea that she moved to different strategies after a translation was offered because it did not seem accurate enough.

**R:** *Ok, más adelante en el minuto 9 tenemos la explicación del ejercicio sobre las manías. Y ¿algún pensamiento que tú estabas teniendo mientras explicabas lo de manías? hemos visto aquí que dabas varios ejemplos ...*



**Elena:** *Pues pensaba que nunca he encontrado una traducción adecuada al inglés y luego intentaba dar ejemplos que como no hay una traducción o como yo nunca he encontrado una traducción que he encontrado adecuada pues intentaba dar ejemplos que tuvieran todo eso que yo considero que es una manía.*

**R:** *Vale*

**Elena:** *De hecho, el de las escaleras es mío*

**R:** *Ah ¿sí?*

**Elena:** *Y creo recordar que alguien dijo ah ¿sí? ‘eso es de locos jajaja’, pero es que no se me ocurría ninguno y pensé en el que tengo yo.*

During the SR session, Elena justified the use of exemplifying by saying she tried to get across to students her own understanding of this term, including what she considered a *manía* was. She explained how this mediation was also guided by her own knowledge and perception of what this term is supposed to comprise. As Kohler (2015, p. 193) puts it, “mediation is an embodied process that draws upon a teacher’s orientation towards his/her own language and culture, understanding of language and culture”. With the use of different examples, Elena created a wider picture of the concept, giving students two chances to recognise this word and become familiar with similar collocations. She admitted she did not know and had never found a good direct translation for this term, so she provided context to show the dimension of meaning that was missing in the mediation through translation.

As a final note, she shared how she brought her own voice to the examples she chose, especially with the last one, which is a valuable piece of information the researcher would have not been aware of had this SR session not taken place. It is worth noting how the use of personal experience is implicit and does function as mediation since she did not explicitly share with her class that it was about her. The use of personal experiences in this excerpt is different to the one Fernando used in the example of explaining as mediation (extract 6) when he mediated the term *botellón* through his own experience as a university student explicitly. On this occasion, it was explanation, translation and nonverbal strategies that accompanied exemplifying as mediation.

#### **Excerpt 9: *Molestia***

In the first of his lessons that was observed, a face-to-face session with five students, Fernando dealt with the topic of ‘false friends’, words that seem similar between English and in Spanish but have different meanings. Students had just been on a break from the first hour in class, and Fernando restarted his session, talking about a translation exercise



they would have in their final exams for the module. Students were paying close attention to his discourse.

01 **Fernando:** *Y parte de las traducciones o gran problema de las traducciones* (he sits at  
02 one of the tables) *muchas veces son las traducciones literales y los falsos amigos. Hay*  
03 *falsos amigos en muchas lenguas, ¿no? ¿Supongo que francés e inglés o alemán e*  
04 *inglés tienen falsos amigos, pero qué tal falsos amigos españoles? ¿Conocéis alguno?*  
05 *¿Algún falso amigo?*

06 **S1:** (She raises her hand)

07 **Fernando:** *¿Becky cuál conoces?*

08 **S1:** *La 'ropa', siempre pienso que es una rope*

09 **Fernando:** *En efecto, y 'ropa' es clothes, ¿no? Por lo general 'ropa' va a ser en singular en*  
10 *español, decimos 'la ropa' y no 'las ropas'.*

11 **S2:** *Ehmm el 'deporte'*

12 **Fernando:** *'Deporte' ¿cuál sería el falso amigo?*

13 **S2:** *Es lo mismo que deport*

14 **Fernando:** *Sí, sí, totalmente de acuerdo. Y es sport, ¿no? ¿Y Liam tienes alguno?* (Liam  
15 was looking at him and he noticed his attention)

16 **S3:** *'Molestia', ¿sí? 'Molestia'*

17 **Fernando:** *'Molestia', muy bien. En español 'molestia' no es algo tan grave como en inglés.*  
18 *Una molestia es por ejemplo [cuando te duele un poco el pie* ((he touches his right leg,



19 grabbing his right shin while miming a painful face)) ¿no?]. ¿Algún falso amigo más?  
 20 ¿No? Hay muchos la verdad ...



Figure 10. NVC: Fernando miming 'molestia' in excerpt 9.

The search for false friends vocabulary that Fernando initiated with his question (line 04), was followed by the contributions of S1 (line 08) and S2 (line 11), who presented the class with two false friends (*ropa* and *deporte*) that they knew in Spanish. While the teacher used a quick literal translation to mediate the meaning of *ropa* (clothes) and *deporte* (sport), he decided to dedicate more time and strategies to mediate the term that S3 used in his contribution. There was some degree of hesitation in S3's answer (line 16) when he repeated *molestia* twice, with a short verification question in the middle, ¿sí?. This might be what triggered the teacher's mediation that followed.

Bearing in mind that *molestia* can be problematic for English speakers as it has a close sound correspondence with 'molest', a false friend, Fernando proceeded with an explanation about the term, *no es algo tan grave como en inglés* (line 17). It may not have been an unknown term for S3, but Fernando made sure the rest of students understood this term as well, and he initiated the mediation of *molestia* with an initial explanation that was followed by an example and simultaneous miming (a nonverbal strategy). The example, *es por ejemplo cuando te duele un poco el pie*, was mediated in the target language, just like the explanation had been. This strategy was performed alongside a mimed action that



helped Fernando bring his term closer to students' previous knowledge. His painful face while he gave this example and touched his shin seemed enough for students to have reached the meaning of *molestia*, as there is no record of further questions regarding this word.

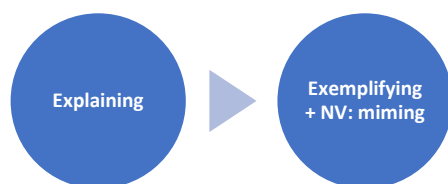


Figure 11. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 9

### Excerpt 10: Avería

The second session run by Elena that was observed, a face-to-face seminar with 15 students, had the goal of practising the subjunctive and the indicative for phrases expressing reality or judgement. Students were completing sentences where they had to decide whether it was an objective fact and they had to use the indicative, or a judgement that required the use of the subjunctive. It was about 20 minutes after the start of this face-to-face seminar when a mediation through exemplifying was captured.

01 **Elena:** (Talking to a student who had a question) *Una avería es cuando una cosa no*  
 02 *funciona* hmmm *por ejemplo si vas al baño [ y en el grifo sale agua* ((she made a gesture  
 03 with her left hand miming opening a tap and her right hand moving upwards as if water  
 04 was coming out of a tap unexpectedly)), *eso es una avería], ¿vale?*

Four minutes later:

05 **Elena:** *Entonces esta avería no tiene arreglo. La avería es cuando una cosa no funciona,*  
 06 *¿de acuerdo? es una ... fault. Muy bien, la 9.*





Figure 12. NVC: Elena miming 'avería' in excerpt 10.

During this session, students were working individually, although their voices were quite loud as they were talking, comparing answers and asking the teacher questions. There was a student (at the left on the image above) who asked Elena a question which was not captured by the recording. However, Elena's answer made it evident that this student was enquiring about the meaning of *avería*, an unknown term for her. The first strategy used by the teacher was an explanation, *es cuando una cosa no funciona* (line 1), which was followed by an example provided simultaneously with a nonverbal strategy. The example chosen to bring this unknown term close to students' realities was *si vas al baño y en el grifo sale agua* (line 02). The simple vocabulary item *agua* alongside the support of a mimed action, where the teacher was moved her hands, as though opening a tap and seeing water coming out in an odd way, facilitated the connection with a situation students might have had in the past or know how to recognise, an example where this term could be used. However, the example on its own might not have been enough mediation since the natural function of a tap is to let water come through. The combination of strategies (verbal and nonverbal) led to the success of this mediation.

The focus of this mediation was linguistic, connecting students' previous knowledge with a new noun. As in the previous excerpts, Elena used the target language for this performance. The student who asked the question was not the only student paying attention to this mediation; the classmate on her right was also attentive. Once Elena completed her example, both of them made some notes in their notebooks. It was only a few seconds later that this second student asked a different question, and no one followed up this initial



mediation with more questions or doubts. It can thus be said this was a successful mediation, judging from students' reactions.



*Figure 13. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 10*

Using language, such as paraphrasing, explaining and/or exemplifying to mediate new concepts were three strategies prevailing in teachers' classroom observations during this study. Exemplifying is the only linguistic strategy that all participants were recorded performing, which may show how inbuilt it is to FL teachers' actions during the class, or demonstrate the teachers' awareness of its success as mediation. However, teachers did not mention examples when asked in the interview about ways to mediate language and culture, though it was reflected upon in one SR session with Elena where she highlighted how different examples may help combine all meanings of an unknown term. The use of translations as a strategy is the last linguistic strategy identified, and is discussed in the following section.

#### **4.4. Translating**

Mediation in this study has been defined as the process of facilitating the negotiation and interpretation of new meanings that goes beyond a simple transfer of meaning and creates connections with students' worlds and the new ones they are learning. Translation is a strategy that can be considered a mediation process as it connects meaning from language A to language B considering previous linguistic and cultural knowledge. Teachers' use of translation as mediation includes engaging "in creative acts of meaning-making between languages and cultures" (McConachy and Liddicoat, 2016, p. 362). This creativity in using translation as mediation involves the capacity to select which words are going to function as a bridge and manage those interpretative resources to create the full meaning of a new concept.

Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 610) differentiate types of translations: "translation in which more emphasis is given to overall meaning than to exact wording is known as free translation. A translation that approximates to a word-for-word representation of the original is known as a literal translation". A simple or literal translation on its own does not always help to construct a thorough meaning as there are cultural and linguistic associations that may need further strategies to achieve its effective mediation. A pedagogic translation is a



type of translation marrying the idea of providing context and using other strategies to complement a more holistic and less professional translation where there is space for interpretation and agency. It is not the end goal to provide an exact written translation that will be recorded for professional purposes. In a mediation framework where teachers make use of translation in class with no time to plan for it, a pedagogic, non-literal translation seems to be able to link the unknown and the known. When using translation as mediation in combination with the other linguistic strategies covered, teachers have the capacity to incorporate a well-equipped bridge to create new meanings in class.

The flexibility entailed in translation as mediation allows teachers to use all languages in their own and their students' repertoires (multilingual translation) to bridge those linguistic and cultural barriers that call forth mediation processes. This view of translation lets the teacher as a mediator "be free to adapt and re-mediate the message according to students' necessities and the conditions in the conversation" (translated from Sánchez Castro, 2013, p. 793). An effective communicative correspondence through this strategy can be ensured by joining different strategies, either together or consecutively, in the creation of meanings; thus, the use of translation in combination with other strategies is foreseeable.

Translation is an established interlinguistic strategy, in contrast to the previous three strategies discussed, all of which were recorded being performed in an intralingual manner. The use of interlingual strategies such as translation is an important strategy that brings to light the rupture of modern language teaching with older language education theories about the importance of teaching monolingually. As Stathopoulou, Melo-Pfeifer and Lontou (2021) highlight, it is thanks to mediation that the intercultural and plurilingual dimension of interaction is finally put in place, moving away from a monolingual view of teaching. Sánchez Castro (2013) agrees with this view, finding in her study that mediation allows the teacher to express his/her freedom by reformulating the message instead of exposing their limits with traditional translation by needing to reproduce the message in exactly the same way in a different language. The following four excerpts illustrate mediation using translations as part of the negotiation of new meanings with students.

#### **Excerpt 11: *Equivocarse***

This excerpt is from later in the same online session as **excerpt 7** (mediation to exemplify *recados*). The teacher once again sent students to different rooms to work in pairs, and she stayed in the main room to practise with S1. The activity consisted of a role play where S1 was Lucia, the granddaughter, and Diana was the grandmother, Rosario. S1 encountered problems with the word *equivocarse* and Diana stopped to make sure she understood the meaning of this 'difficult' word.



- 01 **S1**: *Ah, perdona es que me he en ... uhh I can't say that word ... equivocado?*
- 02 **Diana**: *Muy bien, ¿qué significa equivocado? ¿Me he equivocado?*
- 03 **S1**: *¿Equivocado?*
- 04 **Diana**: *Sorry?*
- 05 **S1**: *Jajaja. Es una palabra difícil*
- 06 **Diana**: *Es una palabra difícil que significa ... (S1 is not answering) ... 'I got it wrong',*
- 07 *¿ya?*
- 08 **S1**: *Ah vale, sí*
- 09 **Diana**: *Equivocarse es hacerlo wrong, to do it wrong, ¿ya? Muy bien, muy bien,*
- 10 *eh ... Es difícil es que es verdad, es larga, ¿ya?*
- 11 **S1**: *Sí, jajaja*

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed with the following text:

Rosario: A ver, Lucía, ¿me has hecho bien todos los recados?  
 Lucía: Bueno, abuela, he comprado unos bollos de pan.  
 Rosario: ¡Pero si yo quería! te pedí te dije que compraras una barra de pan!  
 Lucía: Perdona, es que no había / es que me he equivocado / es que me he olvidado.

Below the text, there are two columns of tasks for two students:

Estudiante A a B:	Estudiante B a A:
<b>Estudiante A: Lucía</b> 1. Comprar unos bollos de pan 2. Enviar el paquete por correo normal 3. Comprar sellos para España 4. Ir a la farmacia para recoger un paquete de pastillas para el colesterol	<b>Estudiante B: Lucía</b> 1. Imprimir una copia del documento 2. Recoger las entradas para la película de esta noche 3. Planchar una blusa 4. Hacer una copia de las llaves nuevas del buzón
<b>Estudiante B: Rosario</b> 1. Comprar una barra de pan 2. Enviar un paquete por correo certificado 3. Comprar sellos para Europa 4. Ir a la farmacia para recoger un paquete de pastillas para la tensión	<b>Estudiante A: Rosario</b> 1. Imprimir 3 copias de un documento 2. Recoger las entradas para el concierto de la semana que viene 3. Planchar las sábanas 4. Hacer dos copias de las llaves nuevas del buzón

On the right side of the interface, there is a list of participants under the heading 'Participants (9)'. The names are partially obscured by black bars. At the bottom right, there is a 'Chat (Everyone)' section with two messages: 'Key-ron' and 'audio set up'.

Figure 14. Exercise followed by Diana in excerpt 11

This online mediation is performed orally, with no written messages from the student or Diana. The focus of the mediation is the linguistic meaning of *me he equivocado* (see the fourth sentence on the slide in the figure above), which is identified as an unfamiliar concept for S1 who shows some uncertainty when pronouncing it. The teacher picks this up immediately and asks her directly about its meaning (line 02). S1's confusion and lack of response after Diana's question can be seen as a sign that a clear mediation is needed.



After showing empathy with the student because of the difficulty of this term, the first mediation strategy used by the teacher is a translation into English: 'I got it wrong' (line 06). S1's reaction was positive, but Diana felt the need to expand this translation, so it did not end there. The meaning continued to be built by paraphrasing the term with a translanguaged utterance drawing on both Spanish and English: *hacerlo wrong* (line 08). At this point, the object of mediation changes slightly into the infinitive form (*equivocarse*) to broaden the understanding of the initial phrase. The paraphrase included *hacer*, which is one of the first verbs Spanish learners learn and this is presumably a word S1 has in her repertoire. However, instead of continuing intralingually, Diana abandoned this style to use English – 'to do it wrong' – blending in half of the previously used translation, 'wrong'. The connection with the previous translation and its integration with the paraphrase bring together the existing knowledge with the new knowledge. The positive response shown in S1's reaction (line 08) may have reassured the teacher of the success of this translation to facilitate the meaning of this unfamiliar concept. In consequence, Elena started using translation (I got it wrong) as a mediation strategy, then interlingual work with paraphrasing the concept translangually was finalised (*hacerlo wrong*) to give way to one more translation as initially provided into English (to do it wrong). The use of plurilingualism and translanguaging is seen in this mediation practice when the teacher used both existing languages in the classroom functionally. The alternation in codes between English and Spanish had an impact on S1's progress in the target language, who could reach this new meaning thanks to the relationships created between translations and translanguaging in more than one language.

Apart from re-mediating the meaning of *equivocado* with two different attempts (a paraphrase and a second translation), the signs of confusion from S1 (lines 03 and 05) during this process provoked an empathic response by the teacher. By clearly sympathising with the struggle S1 is having with this new concept, Diana showed understanding and built a rapport with S1. It is this integrated approach (represented in the figure below) that moves beyond a simple transfer of meaning and guides S1 into an effective process of mediation.



Figure 15. Strategies used by Diana in excerpt 11



### Excerpt 12: *Ingenua*

Elena, teaching face-to-face, was correcting an activity where students had to fill a gap with one of the expressions learnt that day which are used to indicate a cause, such as *debido a*, *a causa de*, and *por*. She asked S1 to translate the sentence he had just completed in front of the class, however, he struggled with the meaning of *ingenua*:

01 **Elena:** ¿Qué significa esta frase? 'Sí, ya lo sabía yo, a mí siempre me pasan estas  
02 cosas por ingenua.' ¿Qué significa esto?

03 **S1:** These things always happen to me ... in general?

04 **Elena:** Mmm *no, cuidado. Ingenua es una persona inocente*, naive. ¿Vale?

05 **SS:** (They make some notes in their books)

The teacher queried S1 about the meaning of the whole sentence, which he managed well until he reached an unfamiliar term: *ingenua*. His incorrect translation prompted the teacher to start the process of connecting the linguistic meaning of this item to students, which she did following two different strategies. S1's answer causes the teacher to warn him, *cuidado* (line 04), and that was the start of this mediation opportunity. First of all, Elena facilitated a paraphrasing of *ingenua* by saying *una persona inocente* (line 04), treating the word *inocente* as known by students. A final translation followed, similarly to the previous four cases where translation was seen to be used by several teachers as a supportive strategy to confirm a term in Spanish thought to be part of students' repertoire when they have no guarantee of this knowledge.

In the present data, translation is the process whereby teachers reformulate the meaning of a Spanish word or expression into English, or the use of Spanish as a reformulation for a word in English that students have asked for. Paraphrasing is another type of reformulation strategy, but in this case, it is done intralingually in Spanish. It is, therefore, logical to see it embedded in excerpts which also contain translations within the mediation process, as with this example. Despite being a short example with medium collaboration from students, the use of translation as a thread to connect this new meaning with students' knowledge is evident and the unknown noun is successfully mediated.



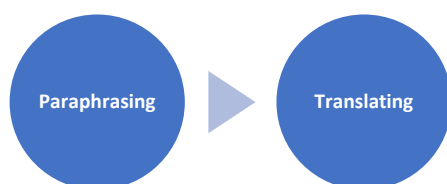


Figure 16. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 12

### Excerpt 13: Dejar de

Fernando, teaching face-to-face, was in a session with seven students, looking at idiomatic verbal expressions (such as *acabar de*, *empezar a* and *dejar de*), when he stopped and focused on the meaning of *dejar de*:

01 **Fernando:** *Tenemos 'dejar de' con infinitivo. 'Dejar de' es stop something or give up*  
 02 *something, ¿de acuerdo? No es como to have a pause, to have a break, es más*  
 03 *como to stop something for good. Por ejemplo, give up smoking es 'dejar de fumar',*  
 04 *¿sí?*

05 **S1:** (She asks a question referring to his explanation)

06 **Fernando:** *'Dejar de' significa to give up or to stop. Imaginad que soy muy bueno*  
 07 *jugando al fútbol, which is false, pero empiezo la universidad y digo no tengo tiempo*  
 08 *para jugar al fútbol, por lo tanto, dejo de jugar al futbol o he dejado de jugar al fútbol*  
 09 *en la universidad. Es como I stop, I give up. Ese 'dejar de' no significa to have a small*  
 10 *break, like having a break for your life, es más como stop something for good or*  
 11 *give up, ¿de acuerdo? ¿Sí? ¿Todo bien?*

The objective of this mediation was to facilitate the linguistic meaning of *dejar de*. Fernando began by focusing on the use of this expression in a correct grammatical structure followed by an infinitive. This type of verbal expression can be misunderstood if translated literally and Fernando moved his attention to mediating its meaning by presenting students with multiple translations followed up by as many explanations as possible to help them interpret this new meaning completely.

The first strategy used by the teacher was to offer two translations into English: 'stop something' and 'give up something'. The meaning was rapidly created by these two words that were part of students' linguistic repertoire, however, this translation was supported as he continued his intervention interlingually by adding another layer of explanation with two terms that were not to be confused with this meaning: 'have a pause' and 'have a break'. Fernando reinforced the use of translations by offering and comparing different possibilities in English. It is interesting to see how the key terms were chosen in English whereas the rest of the intervention was kept in the target language as a unifying thread: *tenemos*, *no*



*es como, por ejemplo*. This multilingual approach allowed the teacher to connect each language within his speech and maintain students' attention. After redefining this new meaning through translation and its limitations with the explanation, the teacher repeated the initial translation 'stop something' with a further remark 'for good' to match and complement the previous explanation offered. Then Fernando used the initial translation again in a collocation where students might encounter this new concept: 'give up smoking' (line 03).

After answering S1's question, Fernando resumed the mediation of this concept in order to make sure it had been effective and not lost with the previous interruption. This time, he carefully elaborated some more explanations, using the same two translations (to give up and to stop in line 06). S1 feedback could not prove it had been successful in the first combination of translation and explanation used. As a consequence, Fernando is seen using translation and explanations repeatedly in an attempt to re-mediate this verb and the relationship between those two strategies were key to build this mediation instance.

This was an intervention with a low degree of collaboration from students, who were listening and nodding. All these layers, embedded in a short intervention done primarily by the teacher, constructed a system to help students interpret *dejar de* thoroughly.

The multiple layers used helped to draw the whole picture of this new meaning. They are illustrated in the following figure.



*Figure 17. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 13*

When teachers translate as a strategy for mediation, the negotiation and interpretation of a new term is guided by the exchange of a word or words in a different language. The objective of using translations as mediation is to be able to construct the meaning of a word with the assistance of approximate equivalents known in other languages. As was seen with the previous strategies, translation was also used in conjunction with other strategies in a multilayered and complex way, being combined with the linguistic strategies of paraphrasing, explanation and exemplifying, as well as the nonverbal strategies of personal experiences and miming.



Translations are the classic case of interlingual mediation, and are often preceded or followed by other strategies to mediate vocabulary, either interlingually or intralingually. The examples selected here have as the focus of the mediation the formation of a bridge between the new term and words the students know in the classroom common language (English). There is a clear tendency for teachers, at this intermediate level, to maximise the use of Spanish when mediating, which could explain why translation is not the first strategy used in many cases. In some cases (excerpts 4, 11, and 13), translation is used both at the beginning or in the middle of the mediation process and again at the end, as a method to check that the students achieved the connections required to get to the new meaning. Translation was commonly found as the final strategy, where it helped to re-mediate and end the intervention successfully. It can be deduced that these mediations where translation is the last strategy (excerpts 4, 11, 12 and 13) only work because translation allows them to find a complete meaning as it was the solution teachers adopted when other mediation failed. Not all direct translations have successfully transferred the new meaning (excerpt 4), but success is not what makes a mediation strategy a form of mediation. In those cases, teachers elaborated further through the use of other strategies to re-mediate the process.

Of the 13 examples analysed so far where linguistic strategies were present, translation was present in six, making it a relevant and often activated mechanism for mediation by teachers in this study. All teachers except Carmen are represented in the three translation examples that were analysed in this subsection. These quantifications show how useful it was for teachers, and it can be inferred that this is a strategy they usually trust. However, the data shows that Carmen did not have a predilection for translation as a mediation strategy, and this is supported by what she expressed during SR sessions and the interview. Carmen's reflection on the use of translation during one of the SR sessions related to her avoidance of the use of English: "*Trato de evitar al máximo utilizar el inglés.*" Teachers' views on translation, taken from the insights they shared during SR sessions and the final interview, included: (1) some beliefs that translation should not be used in the Spanish classroom, (2) some indications about when to use translations if needed and finally (3) some benefits in using translation as mediation.

There were indications that the teachers believed translation should not be used when teaching Spanish. To begin with, teachers implied there was a need to stop translation being used as the first strategy to mediate new concepts because it was done by students and that created misunderstandings. Therefore, teachers tried to lead by example, expressing a preference to avoid translation and encourage other strategies among their students, such as explanations. Diana remarked: "*Y a veces cuando les dices 'qué es esta palabra?' en ese momento te lo dicen en inglés y yo les digo 'no, pero como lo explicas'*". Carmen also



mentioned the natural reaction of students to do this, adding “*cuando les preguntas una palabra que no conocen muy bien, la inmediata reacción es que te la traducen*”. Diana was recorded using translation as mediation, especially as the last strategy in a series. However, her views on students negotiating new meanings through translations is that it is equivalent to making errors. During her interview she stated:

*Hacerle ver al estudiante que su error es haberlo traducido del inglés, lo que ha hecho ha sido cogerlo del inglés y traducirlo al español, pero esa equivalencia no existe, es esto. ¿Verdad? Y después ya le explicas, ¿por qué es esto? Porque en español tal y cual, pero primero hacerle ver cuál es su error. El error es que lo ha traído del inglés, para mí es importante que se dé cuenta conscientemente porque lo hacen inconscientemente.*

She clarified it was students’ use of translation that was seen as a wrong move and her intention was to make them aware of why this could create more misunderstandings than meaning-creations. Both online teachers leaned towards the use of explanations over translations in their comments, but in Diana’s case, it was not corroborated in the observed lessons, since she was seen making use of translations as a last but also a first strategy to successfully mediate in class herself.

Beliefs highlighting the benefits of this strategy include the quickness and simplicity with which it can be done and how it may be useful if some students already know the meaning. In the SR session following the lesson including excerpt 8 on *manías*, Elena confirmed that she decided to opt for a translation to negotiate this meaning because it was simpler:

*siempre intent ... intento, que expliquen la palabra antes de dar la traducción en inglés, siempre yo intento explicar la palabra antes de dar la traducción en inglés. Pero a veces es imposible porque enseguida saltan con la traducción. Pensé es más simple si les digo la traducción.*

Her beliefs reflect her actions of using translation as a final strategy in most of the observed cases. However, it was not only the simplicity of offering a translation that moved Elena to use this strategy, but also its speed, promptly facilitating the interpretation of a new word. During one of the SR sessions, she was asked: “*¿En qué estabas pensando cuando explicaste este concepto de avisar como warning?*” And she replied:

*Creo que hice un análisis de un segundo de si les explico lo que significa en español voy a estar 20 minutos. Entonces es mejor darles la traducción y luego pensé que probablemente se podría confundir con otras palabras que*



*sonaban que fonéticamente parecidas en inglés como warm o algo y entonces pensé voy a darles w-a-r-n [spelling it out].*

This was not an isolated comment concerning the effectiveness of translation. In a different discussion she shared the following:

*Pensé que arreglar tardaría bastante rato en explicar en español porque tampoco conocían el concepto de avería entonces creo que después se me ocurrió pensar a lo mejor podría haber dado algún, un ejemplo de un coche que no funciona y estás en la carretera tirado, pero pensé es más simple si les digo la traducción.*

This comment supports her reasoning on some of the advantages of using this strategy, which includes its time-effectiveness and simplicity, which work effectively in facilitating new meanings to students.

Fernando shed some light on the part students play in the use of translation as mediation in the classroom, which according to his view saves teachers from using translation themselves. In one of the SR sessions, Fernando commented on a student offering a translation for the word *libras*:

*Sí, me suena que alguien lo hubiera confirmado, pero al menos es una confirmación de una fuente externa y luego algunas palabras son fáciles de explicar en inglés, en español otras, no te queda más remedio que soltarles esa traducción en inglés, pero bueno aquí por lo menos fue fácil, sobre todo con el contexto de que una persona lo sabía ya.*

Reassurance of the effectiveness of the use of translation as mediation and seeing it as a part of a complex layered process, which often comes last due to teachers' beliefs, might reinforce views on the effective use of this strategy by teachers.

However, the benefits of this strategy – such as it being quick and efficient – are in conflict with the risk of misunderstandings when using translation as mediation (excerpts 8, 11 and 13). As Howell (2017, p. 150) suggests, 'the source and the target texts do not express the same meanings'. Trusting in translation to mediate a concept can be risky as one word in English does not always equal one word in Spanish and sometimes the use of explanations, examples or paraphrasing may help avoiding misunderstandings: in fact, none of the teachers used translation on its own, they always combined it with other strategies. Fernando shared his view of this problem during one of his SR sessions, saying: "*el problema que tienen muchos de ellos es que las traducen literalmente. Y por eso quise asegurarme de que no nosotros centralmente que son idiomáticas. Y explicar un poco en*



*qué consistían.*” Elena, during an SR session, also shared how she does not like offering literal translations – “*No me gusta dar la traducción literal*” – although she did not add any justification for this.

Combining explanations with translations seems to help direct or literal translation as a mediation strategy. In fact, there was strong evidence in this study for the use of translation as a final strategy once others had been deployed, and this was supported by the triangulation that classroom observations offered. The three excerpts selected for translation as mediation here captured translation being used as the final strategy, to confirm or add support to previous strategies that may have failed.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Learning to manage paraphrases, explanations, examples, and translations can be key to bridging different languages and cultures in meaningful ways for students in the classroom. All these strategies allow teachers to link students’ realities, using their known languages and cultures to the unknown. The use of these strategies was observed to be a complex, sometimes intertwined, activity of multiple layering, where teachers made use of different strategies alternately until an understanding was reached by students (or teachers perceived that it was reached). This included using a sequence of strategies one after the other, but also using different strategies simultaneously when exemplification was activated at the same time as a nonverbal strategy (e.g., in excerpt 9, *molestia*).

Some research on these linguistic strategies as a means of amplifying and clarifying the meaning of new concepts when mediating in the classroom is highlighted in the literature chapter (Gibbons, 2003; Rössler, 2009; Stathopoulou, 2015; Herazo Rivera and Sagre Barboza, 2016; Schwartz and Gorbatt, 2017). However, previous researchers have investigated them from the learners’ point of view, where they were used to compensate for a lack of language knowledge, not for teaching. The findings here show how they are used by teachers in successful mediation around nouns, conjunction phrases and verbs. The linguistic strategies mainly focused on linguistic aspects of language, sometimes tapping into special cultural connotations, such as in excerpt 6 when mediating *botellón* through explanation.

Regarding the use of paraphrasing, teachers often embedded definitions in those structures. In fact, Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 421) list ‘definition’ as a type of paraphrase: “dictionary definitions often take the form of paraphrases of the words they are trying to define”. When teachers became aware that a term was unknown or were asked to define a term by students, a mediation opportunity was seized, and the words they used to try to define the unfamiliar concept took the form of a paraphrase. These reformulations



used in paraphrasing did not focus only on adding meaning but on bringing the new concept closer to students' knowledge. The connection created between the known words that students have learnt and the new term the teacher is introducing through the use of other terms which are often simpler is a characteristic of the examples of paraphrasing as mediation in this section.

The analysis of the data shows that translations are usually a quicker way to mediate vocabulary compared to the other strategies such as paraphrasing, explanations or examples, which are usually longer, more specific interventions. Considering the data, there seem to be various reasons why translation is a fast mediation strategy. Translations were often shorter because, in comparison with the other linguistic strategies, teachers had the certainty that students were familiar with the words used. By bringing students closer to a known word, the interpretation of the new meaning was created effectively, and translation allowed teachers to connect the unknown in the target language with the known in L1 or other languages in their repertoire. Teachers shared their reflections on how important they consider explanation against a direct translation during SR sessions, and they seem to give more weight to consideration of the problems that translation can create through misunderstandings than to what it can solve in mediation. As has been noted, translation was mainly used at the end of the negotiation of meaning, which shows how meaning was actually facilitated through this last strategy – teachers continued re-mediating until they considered it successful, and this often occurred after a translation.

Another question to consider on the basis of the data would be whether online or face-to-face teachers have a particular preference for using linguistic mediation strategies. The results have shown that teachers use these strategies equally, with similar frequency and following the same patterns of combining them with other strategies while assessing students' feedback to decide about intervening with re-mediations. The only difference was with translation, where online environments captured the use of this strategy as mediation orally but also in the written chat, which students in that teaching mode used to contribute to mediation.

Overall, teachers have been observed using linguistic strategies as mediation mostly combined with other strategies, forming layers out of different attempts to bring the unknown closer to students. Some possible misunderstandings and examples of failed mediation were amended by continuing with more layers of strategies. This mediation provides a multilayered bridge which teachers have used effectively. The analysis has also shown that teachers pay attention to students' feedback to evaluate their own mediation attempts on the basis of their perceptions of whether they are supporting learning. This process of



identifying the unknown by either prompting students or being prompted by them, followed by the use of a linguistic strategy, in Spanish (with the exception of translated words in the case of translation as mediation), and an assessment for possible re-mediation according to students' feedback, is the pattern that has been found in the data.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: NONVERBAL STRATEGIES**

This set of strategies refers to instances of NVC used as mediation to connect the known with the unknown in language teaching. Language classes are inherently multimodal, as they usually present interactive communication between teachers and students, who activate every resource available, be it verbal (V) or nonverbal (NV). The NVC analysed here was present in face-to-face contexts (with the teachers Elena and Fernando), where embodied communication was observed. However, the online context selected for this study did not offer observable nonverbal cues that could serve to assist in the interpretation of new meanings. The online teachers (Carmen and Diana) followed a pedagogical approach that did not consider it essential to turn on their video cameras, which made recording of embodied actions when they were teaching impossible. Teachers could see student feedback through smiley faces, hand gestures with a thumbs up option in the chat, and other interactive emoticons, which potentially helped to monitor students' attention, participation and understanding. However, these nonverbal digital icons were not part of any linguistic and cultural mediation as they were not used as strategies to help students negotiate the target language and culture in a meaningful and personal way. It is worth noting that during the time of data collection for this study, online teaching was not as widespread as has been the case since March 2020 (the start of the Covid-19 pandemic) when video for both teachers and students began to be extensively used for educational purposes through emerging technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Even though the literature on language and culture mediation has yet to produce a strong body of research relating NVC and NV behaviour (NVB), the literature on coordinating NV and V modes can provide initial guidance to understand how these strategies work and link this general literature to the strategies teachers use to mediate foreign languages identified in this study. The NV data discussed in this chapter consists of the range of gestures that teachers performed when they were in the process of bringing new concepts to students' realities. The categorisation was developed based on the mediation used in the classroom data to bridge concepts. The three main types of mediatory gestures identified in the data that include hand and some full-body gestures are: (1) miming, (2) showing and (3) pointing.



In the following excerpts, only some transcriptions of interactions are presented with screenshots from the video recordings. The reason why some of these excerpts are not illustrated is that the video recordings were made with a single camera, which did not capture every move from every angle, and so relying on the field notes and transcriptions was key. As in the previous chapter, the transcriptions use double parentheses to describe when gestures are being used as mediation and square brackets to mark the start and end of gestures and speech that are found overlapping in the same intervention (Hepburn, 2017). Single parentheses are used for other comments about nonverbal elements or to give the researcher's impressions while on site.

The way these three types of gestures were used by teachers as embodied activities to allow mediation to be performed are analysed in the next eight excerpts, within each of the three categories: miming (excerpts 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18), showing (excerpts 19 and 20) and pointing (excerpt 21).

### 5.1. Miming

Teachers were observed miming or enacting verbs and nouns that students had difficulties with to help them understand them. Mime gestures have also been called illustrators (Gordon and Druckman, 2018). The gestures involved with miming are generally socially learnt and they are also directly linked to speech. Peltier and McCafferty (2010, p. 332) supported the idea that the act of mimesis was the primary way to create "holistic, imagistic renderings of objects and events" and it is in fact the most common NV strategy found in this data. In the following five excerpts, teachers show NVB that offers an alternative explanation to the verbal support that accompanied the gesture, which was the same characteristic representing pointing as mediation. Donald (2001, p. 240) defined mimesis as "an analogue style of communication that employs the whole body as an expressive device". The miming gestures found as links between new information the teachers were bridging and students' own knowledge included hand gestures which were sometimes part of whole-body expressions too. The following five excerpts illustrate the types of mimes as mediation by teachers found in this data.

#### Excerpt 14: *Ponerse*

The teacher (Elena) was overseeing students' work on the subjunctive while walking around their desks. At this point, students were working in pairs to change some verbs into the subjunctive, and she noticed two of them discussing possible meanings of a word.

01 **S1 and S2:** (They were discussing what *ponerse* might mean)



02 **Elena:** (She approached them) *Ah ¿ponerse? [significa ponerse*

03 *ropa* ((Elena interrupts the students by standing next to them and intervening with this

04 comment. While saying *ropa* she lifts both hands to her chest and move her arms and

05 shoulders miming the action of putting a piece of clothing on)))]

06 **S1:** Ahh ... to know what to wear?

07 **Elena:** *Sí, exacto*

In this excerpt, the teacher noticed a situation where students would benefit from some help interpreting a new meaning they were struggling with. The unknown concept was the reflexive verb *ponerse* which was situated in the following sentence: “*Eva nunca hace su fiesta de los 80 porque no sabe qué ponerse*”. Elena initiated this process of mediation when she identified the need for a bridge to understand and use the new vocabulary. This transition between the unknown verb *ponerse* to the known concept of getting dressed was assisted through the aid of a definition in Spanish and a nonverbal strategy in which Elena was observed pretending to get dressed, with both hands coming to her chest as if miming putting some clothes on, such as a jacket.

The gesture is performed simultaneously with the verbal support of providing a definition (a paraphrase), which was preceded by *significa* to make clear that a definition was following. This definition consisted of two words, *ponerse ropa*. The second word ‘ropa’ belonged to the students’ level of Spanish, this did not add complexity to the process of interpreting a new meaning by using new words, so students could focus their attention on the gesture. The definition given in the target language consisted in repeating the unknown verb *ponerse* in combination with the noun *ropa* (line 03). Repeating the same unfamiliar concept in the definition did not provide a thorough and precise meaning of the verb and made this definition simple. Nevertheless, the teacher’s choice of the word *ropa* as the verb complement helped students begin to create connections between this known word that belonged to their existing vocabulary repertoire and the unknown concept. This verbal support introduced the nonverbal strategy, as the mime was performed at the same time as the teacher pronounced the last word of this definition, *ropa*. In this excerpt, Elena elaborates a bit more on this verbal support and the word *ropa* is not just a deictic referent, but it brings meaning with it. Perhaps the use of a definition required more concentration and effort from the teacher than a deictic expression using *esto* and this is why the nonverbal strategy was not initiated at the same time but towards the end of the verbal definition. The use of both strategies – the miming and the definition – contributes to constructing a meaningful connection between the verbal support with the familiar concept



of *ropa*, the miming gesture of the shared understanding of getting dressed, and the new verb *ponerse* as the concluding target of the mediation.

The relationship between the enactment of getting dressed and verbalising the use of this verb with its complement *ropa*, helped the students bridge a meaningful connection to understand this new meaning. Both modes functioned as necessary points to bridge the associations by creating a common space for understanding the word *ropa* and the gesture. The combination of verbal and nonverbal was essential in this excerpt. Despite the fact that the students knew (or were assumed to know) the word *ropa*, by itself this would not be enough to infer the meaning of the target concept, since there are a great number of possibilities for verbs with which *ropa* can be used. It is the gesture that helped the students interpret this concept; the teacher's embodiment added a layer that made students negotiate the meaning conclusively.

The students reacted with an interjection *ahh* (line 04), which seems to indicate the effectiveness of the teacher's miming performance. S1 also offered a direct translation into English, and Elena confirmed the success of a layered mediation carried out by nonverbal and definitional strategies by saying *exacto*. Confirmation that the new meaning has been created and understood is often found as a translation to vouch for its assimilation: sometimes it is students who prove they have connected their own knowledge of this new term with the translated version, and on other occasions, it is the teacher who completes a mediation act with the strategy of translation (see 4.2.4). In this case, the final translation was not a strategy used by the teacher, who relied on her short definition and the gesture representing an example of how to use this verb; instead it was used by the students, who showed self-mediation with this action. The following diagram presents how the teacher used NVC underpinned by a definition to successfully aid students in interpreting new knowledge, without the need to re-mediate and make use of further strategies.



Figure 18. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 14

### Excerpt 15: *Pisar*

In this excerpt, Elena started correcting an exercise where students were using a new word they had just been introduced to, *césped*, to practice the negative imperative in Spanish (see excerpt 21 for *césped*). She was asked about another word here, *pisar*.



01 **Elena:** *Vale ¿y la 10?*

02 **S1:** *No pise el césped por favor*

03 **Elena:** *[No pise el césped por favor (while writing it on the board)]*

04 **S2:** *¿Qué es pisar?*

05 **Elena:** *Pisar es [esto ((and she proceeds to stamp her left foot on the floor))), ¿de*  
06 *acuerdo?*

07 **SS:** Ohh

08 **Elena:** *Entonces [NO ((stamping her right foot with more*  
09 *emphasis than with her other foot she had just previously demonstrated, while*  
10 *looking at students))] pises el césped].*

11 **SS:** (After students looked at her gesture, most of them write something down in  
12 their notebooks)



*Figure 19. NVC: Elena miming 'miming the act of stepping on something with one's feet in excerpt 15*

In this excerpt, S2 prompted the teacher with a vocabulary question about the verb *pisar* (line 04) which initiated this mediation process. Elena tried to bridge a meaningful connection between the unknown word *pisar* and its meaning through the use of NVC. The act of miming what the verb means by embodying the action of stamping her left and right feet as a way of illustrating the meaning (to walk on, to tread on) facilitated the interpretation of this new term. By sharing this enactment with students, the teacher helped them create a new meaning for the word *pisar*.

The first nonverbal action (line 05) was carried out simultaneously with the teacher saying *pisar es esto*. The pronoun *esto* connected the target *pisar*, which was unknown to the students, with the known and recognisable gesture of walking on or treading on something



with one's foot. The close relationship created by the teacher between the verbal communication *esto* acting as a deictic function and the miming of *pisar* shows how both modes (V and NV) elaborate each other reciprocally during this mediation.

Students produced a reassuring interjection (line 07) that can be seen as a sign of understanding and effective capture of this interpretation of the word *pisar*. However, the teacher used this new word once more to recap and provide a second attempt to mediate its meaning. On this occasion, Elena shifted from *esto* to *pises* while choosing the same type of NVC to enact the action of this verb. The significance of this change of the verbal support offers a sense of reinforcement of the meaning students had already interpreted with the first gesture and its verbal referent *esto* within the context of this exercise.

The mediated verb is *pisar*, which was what S2 asked about, but it is necessary to take into account the context of this term, which came from a negative command in their exercise forbidding the act of *pisar*: *no pise* (line 02). Elena's exaggerated gesture of miming this term with a loud stamp of her foot that attracted the students' attention (as can be seen in Figure 19) is perhaps related to the negative mode of the sentence in question, as the teacher mediated the meaning of *pisar* in a context of forbidding.

During the SR session the teacher was asked to comment on this gesture, and she said: "*Me pareció la manera más rápida de explicarlo, en inglés sería keep off y no hay traducción directa.*" She justified her decision to use a nonverbal strategy to mediate this new meaning firstly because it seemed to her the quickest way to explain its meaning, and secondly, because she considered that there is not a direct translation into English other than 'keep off', and this literal translation would not be mediating S1's question about *pisar*, since that student did not ask for a translation of the negative sentence. Elena's comment confirms how literal translation is often viewed by FL teachers as something to be avoided due to the possible misunderstandings. It is worth noting how during the SR session, the teacher looked for the translation of the negative sentence, instead of the verb she was being asked about, which is backed by her second attempt to mediate this verb, when she highlighted the context in the negative mood. Nevertheless, the teacher's difficulty with finding a good word to use in English moved her to use NVC. This gap in her knowledge, not knowing a literal translation for this term, led to her using miming to mediate; this is an idea supported by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010 and 2014), who suggest that mimes "are generally associated with overcoming a lack in vocabulary" (2014, p. 366). Finally, it was also the immediacy of answering a student's question in class that pushed the teacher to opt for miming as a strategy to convey the meaning by the verbalisation of the word *esto* and *no pise* to accomplish the mediation.



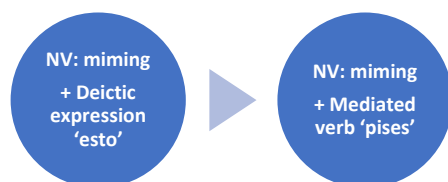


Figure 20. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 15

### Excerpt 16: *Mojar*

Elena was practising the subjunctive tense to give orders during this face-to-face session. After confirming the sentence *Te ordeno que vuelvas antes de medianoche* was correct, students mentioned Cinderella as someone to whom this sentence could have been said. Students also mentioned gremlins, and they started talking about their characteristics. Students tried to say they could not get wet, and Elena asked them: “How do you say it in Spanish?”. After a few seconds of checking that they did not know how to say that in the target language, she continued as follows.

01 **Elena:** *Mojar* (and she wrote *mojar(se)* on the whiteboard). *Mojar o mojarse*.

02 *Mojar es cuando ... ¿recordáis? ... mojar es cuando [tú]* ((she points at herself with

03 both hands inward while saying *tú*))



Figure 21. NVC: Elena miming the act of pointing at oneself in excerpt 16.

04 *pones agua en* ((she bends her left-hand fingertips inward separating her thumb,

05 presumably holding something, and moves her hand slowly from left to right with



06 her elbow out as if pouring some liquid))) *algo o alguien*



Figure 22. NVC: Elena miming the action of pouring some water in excerpt 16

07 *y mojarse es cuando [tú ((she points at herself with both hands displaying her fingers*  
08 *inward and looking at students))]*



Figure 23. NVC: Elena miming the action of pointing at oneself in excerpt 16

09 **S2:** Get wet!

10 **Elena:** Exactly, when you get wet

11 **S3:** *Mojar en, en?*

12 **Elena:** *Mojar ... ehmm* (she puts her hand in her head as thinking), *no, sin*

13 *preposición. Mojar la...¿mesa?* (she directs her gaze toward a table between the  
14 student and herself)

15 **S4:** That's just to get wet

16 **Elena:** *Exacto*, do you say wetting? No ...



17 **S4**: To wet something?

18 **Elena**: Yeah, like putting water in something ...

19 **S4**: Ah, yeah, like to a plant

20 **Elena**: No ... that is water a plant ... that's a different word (she starts writing *REGAR*  
21 on the board)

22 **S5**: ¿*Mojar la cama*?

23 **Elena**: *Mojar la cama sí es correcto* (pointing at the student), *cuando eres un bebé,*  
24 *los bebés mojan la cama, ¿vale?*

25 **SS**: Haha

26 **Elena**: ¿*Vale? Regar es la planta* (tapping the whiteboard with the marker to  
27 highlight the written word), *lo que tú estabas preguntando, regar. Entonces, por*  
28 *ejemplo* (she starts speaking a bit louder now) *si llueve mucho y [yo no tengo*  
29 *paraguas* ((she holds her left hand and lifts it halfway in a vertical fist shape as if  
30 grabbing an umbrella's handle))), *yo es mojarse, ¿de acuerdo? [Yo me mojo* ((she

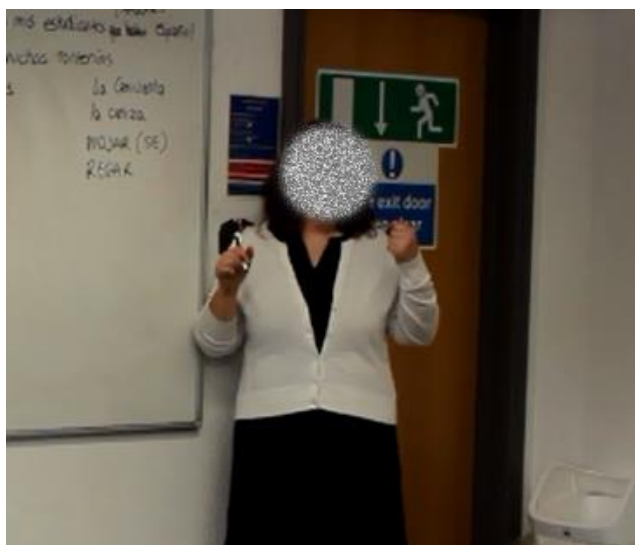


Figure 24. NVC: Elena miming holding an umbrella's handle in excerpt 16

31 said this sentence louder while resting her open left hand on her chest and making  
32 circles around the word *mojar(se)* on the board with the pen in her right hand))]



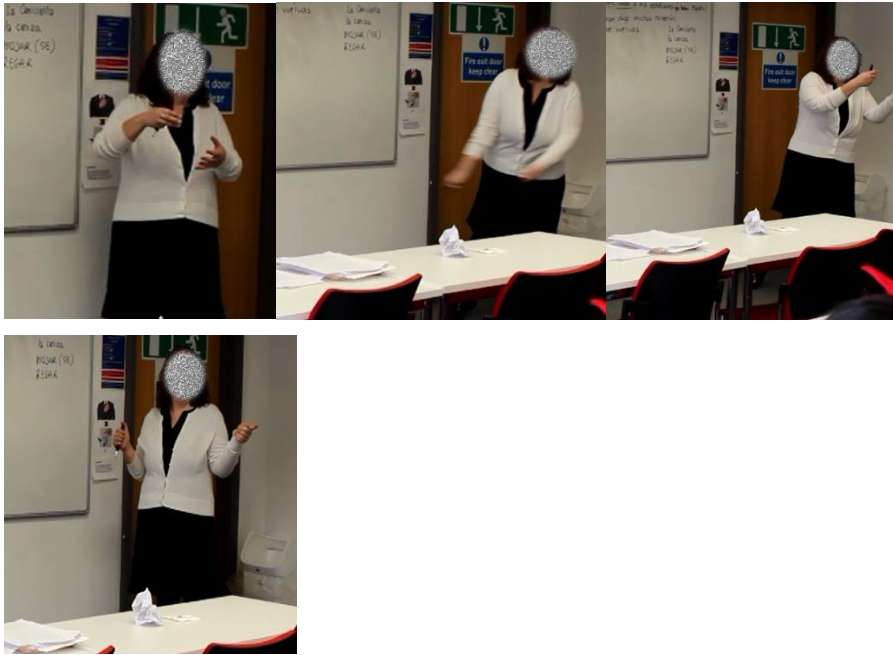


*Figure 25. NVC: Elena pointing at herself by resting her hand on her chest in excerpt 16*

33 **S5:** *Yo me mojo*

34 **Elena:** *Pero si yo estoy en la clase o en la calle con [una botella de agua ((she lifts*  
 35 *both hands at the same time, holding her right hand higher, with fingertips bent*  
 36 *towards her palms in a diagonal position with some distance in between hands as*  
 37 *if grabbing a bottle of water))]* y [*yo hago 'psss' ((she moves both hand to her right*  
 38 *side moving them in a swing movement forward to the left as if throwing the content*  
 39 *on a recipient)) a Laurel, yo mojo a Laurel ((she points at Laurel with her index finger*  
 40 *in the left hand while saying 'Laurel'))]*





*Figure 26. NVC: Elena miming the action of throwing a bucket of water on someone else and pointing at the wet person (last vignette) in excerpt 16*

41 **SS**: Hahaha

42 **Elena**: Hahaha

43 **S5**: Mojado

44 **S3**: Sería muy divertido

45 **Elena**: Haha una batalla de agua

46 **S6**: ¿Mojar y regar son lo mismo?

47 **Elena**: No, son diferentes. Regar es solo para las plantas, ¿vale?

48 **S3**: To water



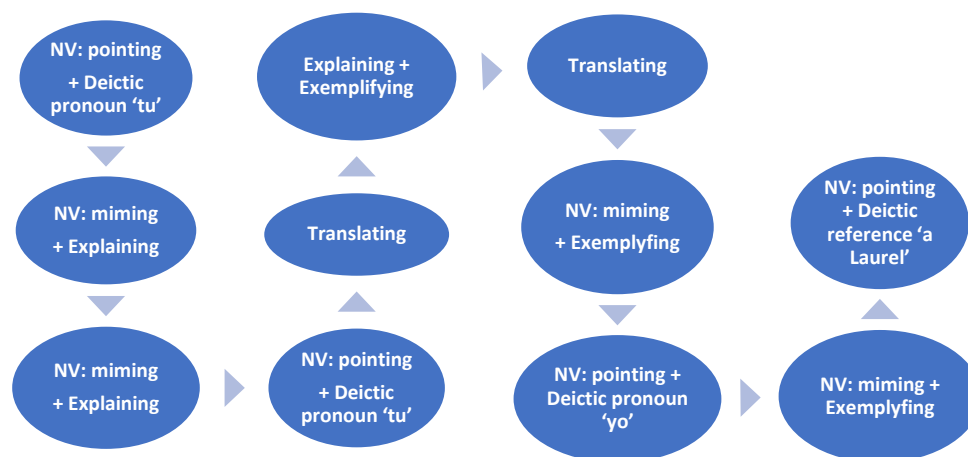


Figure 27. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 16

Guiding students to establish the meaning of the verb *mojar* and differentiate it from *mojarse* was the initial focus of the mediation in this example. The teacher started by offering visual aids for both verbs written on the whiteboard. The main difference between them is reflexivity, as *mojar* is non-reflexive and *mojarse* is a reflexive verb. This aspect is important to notice as Elena's mediations were initiated with the person realising the action of this unknown verb. The first concept to mediate was *mojar* and Elena's sentence ¿recordáis? (line 02) indicates students had learnt this concept already, which could be why the teacher started creating connections with this verb first. Pointing at herself while saying *tú* was Elena's way to mediate the subject of this non-reflexive verb and how the responsibility of this action falls on each of them. However, such a gesture could be interpreted as me instead of you, since she did not point at anyone but herself. Directly after this, she started lifting her left hand to mime the action of pouring some water out of a receptacle. This nonverbal strategy of miming was used alongside a simultaneous complementary verbal explanation *es cuando tú pones agua en algo o alguien*. It is the association that the teacher created between NVC and the linguistic strategy of using an explanation that facilitated students connecting the unknown (or unrecalled) meaning of *mojar* with the known situation illustrated with the gesture of pouring water on someone or something. The use of layering strategies (NVC + explanation) is once again presented in this excerpt, to effectively mediate language.

The teacher did not pause to confirm that this mediation had reached students, but moved to the mediation of the second verb presented by her at the beginning: *mojarse*. On this occasion, the mediation process was stopped by S2 just when Elena was pointing at herself following the same gesture with which she initiated the mediation of the previous word. S2 interrupted Elena offering a direct translation (line 09) which showed the success of the mediation. A translation of her explanation into English followed as a confirmation of S2's



contribution, when Elena said, 'when you get wet' (line 10). It could be argued that due to the effectiveness of the first process of mediating *mojar*, students associated this meaning to another related meaning drawing on their knowledge about language, and that set the basis for a self-mediation by S2 of the meaning of this second verb, *mojarse*. The connections created with *mojar* led students to establish relationships with *mojarse* and it was not necessary, for S2 at least, to create a more direct relationship to the term.

This session continued with S3's question relating to prepositions used with this verb. Elena replied with an explanation, saying you do not need any preposition, and followed that with an example of how to use the verb without prepositions. S4 now said that *mojar* was 'to get wet'. However, this was the same translation that S2 had just given for *mojarse*, and it presented a problematic and confusing situation that brought into question the success of the previous mediation. Nevertheless, Elena confirmed he was right by saying *exacto* and she tried to offer an alternative direct translation of *mojarse* with S4's help. This attempt at translating it differently was not very straightforward or successful, because in Spanish there is a different term for the specific act of putting water on plants, which was S4's example. Instead of agreeing on a translation, despite the collaboration of the students, a new verb in Spanish emerged, *regar*. A SCT lens is observed during lines 15-25 when S4 and S5 contribute to increase knowledge of the uses in the word '*mojar*' through their social interaction while Elena mediates the context. The different layers and scaffolding used through teacher's and students' discourse allowed them to internalise and appropriate such new concepts with their own examples. By situating the learning of these unknown concepts socially and collaboratively, students were engaged in meaning-making processes mediated through Elena's discourse.

The misunderstandings with translations revealed that not all students had created connections for both terms earlier, even though S2 confirmed she had engaged with the initial mediation successfully. Elena recapped and reinforced mediations for *mojar* and *mojarse* again (line 28), starting with the reflexive verb which was the one she was mediating when she was interrupted earlier by S2. Miming was the strategy chosen to help to create stronger links between these terms once more. She acted out the example of getting wet when it rains because you do not have an umbrella with a miming gesture to indicate that there was the handle of an umbrella in her left hand, followed by another gesture of pointing at herself with an open hand to emphasise the reflexivity of the verb. The nonverbal representation of an umbrella co-occurred verbally with the Spanish word *paraguas* to create a meaningful context to situate students in an environment where this gesture made sense. Students seem to have understood that the meaning of *mojarse* was related to water, but this nonverbal example specified its use with rain as an example.



*Mojarse* was then conjugated in the first singular person to match the situation of the teacher getting wet as a consequence of not having an umbrella, and this was accompanied by a hand-pointing gesture where the teacher brought her hand toward her chest to create links between the verbal support *me mojo* and the miming of its reflexivity indicating herself. Students were looking at the teacher while this mediation was taking place and S5 repeated her last sentence as if interiorising the example of *mojarse* while saying *yo me mojo*.

After a very brief pause when S5 spoke, where there was no other contribution by students, the teacher progressed to the verb *mojar*, presenting a new situation in which mimed gestures led the mediation process. Firstly, the teacher mentioned having a bottle of water either in class or outside on the street (line 34) and she represented the size of the bottle with her hands while describing the necessary context for this new example. Then, instead of directly saying the target word *mojo*, she preceded it and replaced it with the onomatopoeic sound *psss*, symbolising the water she was throwing with her performance of grabbing this imaginary bottle of water and moving it toward Laurel. This ‘sound mime’ can be seen as an oral ‘mime’, as opposed to the embodied mimed actions that Elena had performed to that point; Kanero et al. (2014, p. 7) note that these work “as a bridge between non-speech sound and conventional words”, and also known as onomatopoeia or inanimate phonomimes. Finally, instead of pointing at herself as she did with *mojarse*, she pointed at Laurel to clarify it was her who got wet while supporting this action verbally with the sentence *yo mojo a Laurel*, mediating the target verb.

Students laughed, as did the teacher, and they agreed it would be a funny situation if this example was true, which showed a relaxed environment in the classroom. S5 intervened saying the adjective *mojado* out loud, showing some understanding while again processing the information with his own words, as he did with *mojarse*. Finally, S6 expressed some confusion by asking whether *mojar* and *regar* were the same, but Elena answered verbally explaining they were different, which was backed up by S3, who translated *regar* into English. Considering students’ reactions, and the teacher’s perseverance at re-mediating both terms once more, it can be inferred that this was overall a positive and effective negotiation of *mojar*, *mojarse* and *regar*.

The collateral lexical retrieval (*botella* and *paraguas*) involved in these nonverbal mediation instances helped to create a relationship with other terms and between the object or actions mimed and the verbal and written support offered by the teacher.

The teacher’s ready use of NVC accompanied by explanations and exemplifying strategies served as an intermediary association that triggered student’s access to memory and connections to interpret the new meaning. Furthermore, this combination of all modalities –



visual (the word on the whiteboard), verbal (her explanations and examples) and kinesic (miming the action) – shows an integration of strategies in a multimodal example of mediation.

### **Excerpt 17: *Engordar/adelgazar***

In the next excerpt, which was recorded some minutes after the previous excerpt (about *mojar* and *mojarse*), Elena was asked about the translation of ‘to become fat’ while students were working in pairs on writing some sentences. This interaction happened towards the end of a session where students had been practising different verb tenses.

01 **S1**: Elena, is ‘to become’ *quedarse*?

02 **Elena**: *Hmm ... No, hay diferentes verbos en español ...* To become? (after saying  
03 ‘become’ she moves her left open hand from left to right horizontally making two  
04 stops in the air while closing her fist at the end as if indicating missing parts of  
05 the sentence)

06 **S1**: Fat

07 **Elena**: Then, we have a verb which is *engordar*

08 **S2**: That makes sense

09 **Elena**: (She writes *engordar* and *adelgazar* on the whiteboard with the  
10 ‘not equal to’ sign ≠ between them) ¿Vale?

11 **SS**: (They nod)

12 **S1**: Would you say ... would it be reflexive?

13 **Elena**: [*Engordar es estar más gordo* ((she holds her hands wide open far from  
14 each other)) y *adelgazar es más delgado* ((she transitions from the position where  
15 she had her hands, narrowing the gap between them until her fingertips touch  
16 once her hands are closer enough))]

17 **S1**: Is it not reflexive?

18 **T**: No



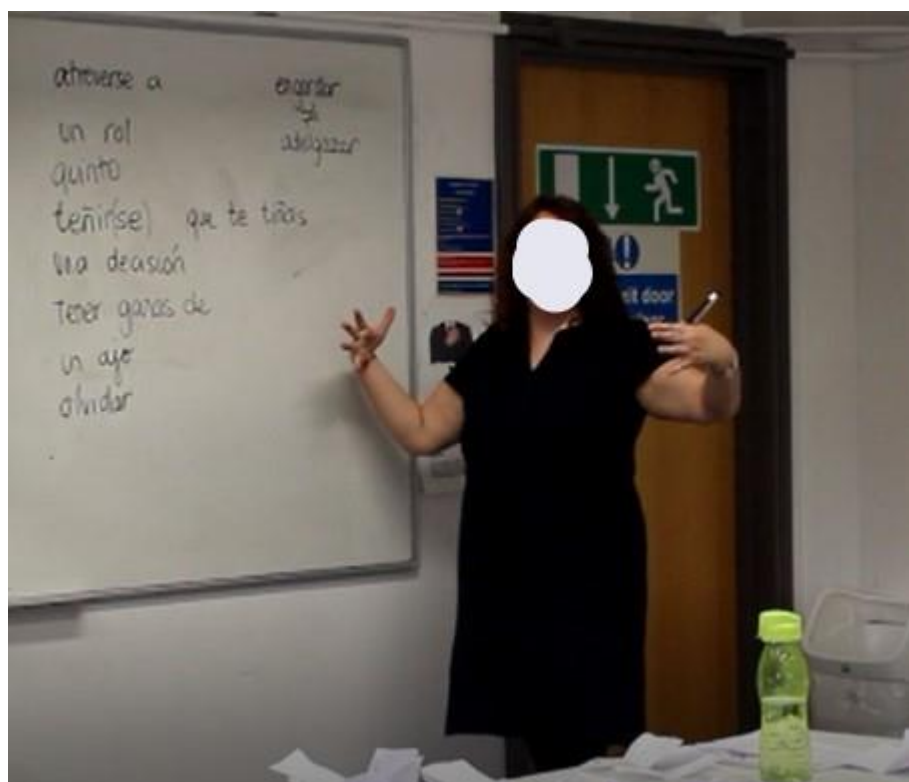


Figure 28. NVC: Elena miming 'engordar' in excerpt 17

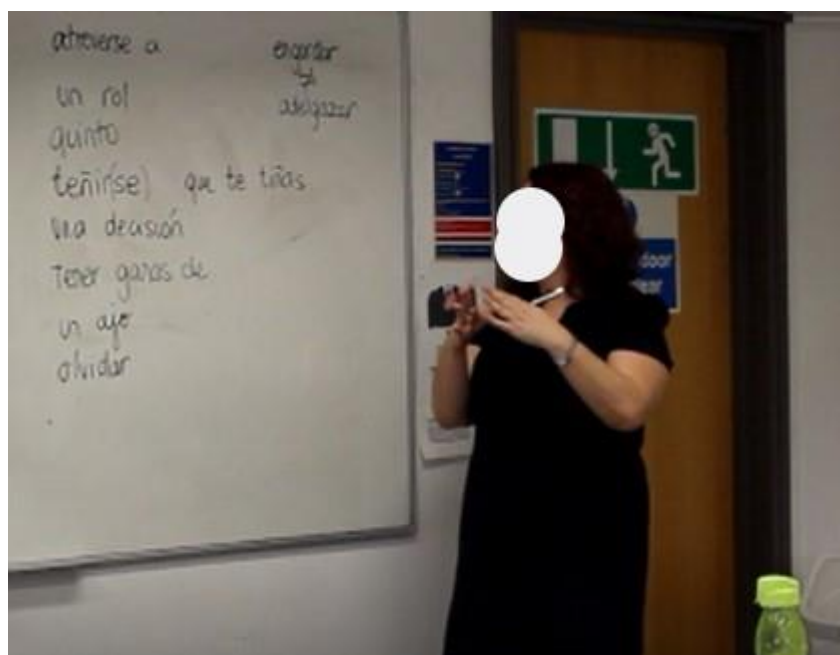


Figure 29. NVC: Elena miming 'adelgazar' in excerpt 17

In this excerpt, S1 prompted a mediation process with a vocabulary question: 'Is "to become" *quedarse*?' The teacher helped S1 articulate her question about the meaning she was looking for, because the translation of the verb 'to become' into Spanish can vary greatly depending on the context and what other words follow in the sentence. After this



contribution, S1 refined her question by adding 'fat', which offered a more precise concept that allowed the teacher to identify the context of the term and proceed with the mediation. On one hand, the teacher narrowed the specific meaning of such a versatile verb as 'to become' at the start, which was easily picked up by S1 and helped to limit the uses of this word to ensure effective connections are created between the student and the new concept to mediate. On the other hand, the identification of the target concept did not exclude the mediation of bordering concepts; as has been seen in this study, mediation processes tend to include other words that become entangled in interpreting an unknown term.

Immediately after offering an oral translation of the word into Spanish – *engordar* (line 07) – Elena wrote it on the whiteboard alongside its antonym *adelgazar*, separating the two with a 'not equal to' sign, which offered some textual support that anticipated the following verb to be mediated through verbal and nonverbal strategies. *Adelgazar* is a 'bordering' or adjoining word to the initial concept *engordar* that the teacher identified and included in this broad activity of mediation, as it is another way of saying 'become', which was S1's initial query. Elena then turned to look at the students to start miming both verbs, *engordar* and *adelgazar*.

The teacher used two more strategies to facilitate the meaning of these two verbs, applying gestures to enact the meaning of both words alongside brief definitions through paraphrasing to support her NVC. As can be seen in Figure 28, the teacher stretched her hands wide whereas in Figure 29 she is seen bringing her hands closer together, to the point that they nearly touch. The idea of 'becoming' is interpreted from the movement of the hands and arms; Elena encapsulated the change of state by miming the change from *engordar* to *adelgazar*. Mediating the new concepts by miming these two actions with the gestures that the teacher chose can be understood as reaching for a common understanding. The nature of both gestures (expanding and shrinking) is to some extent literal and iconic and can be associated with *engordar* and *adelgazar*, so the teacher made connections between the shared understanding of the NV miming and the definitions of the new concepts.

Elena did not solely rely on these miming actions and the links students could make between their own perceptions of the meaning of the two gestures and the new concepts written on the whiteboard. More layers were added to this mediation process with the simultaneous use of speech accompanying the NVC, as Elena guided the students with the definitions *engordar es estar más gordo* and *adelgazar más delgado*. The adjectives *gordo* and *delgado*, chosen to be part of this simplified definition, represent a created shared space, with the assumption that they were part of the students' repertoire. While the NVC



of moving her hands encapsulated the change of state, the paraphrases *estar más gordo* and *más delgado* did not involve any change of state. In fact, the paraphrases that were offered were not really accurate, since the verbs *engordar* and *adelgazar* imply action and movement, and this is not offered by paraphrasing the state and looks of a person, *estar más delgado* or *estar más gordo*. Perhaps Elena considered the gestures to be the main strategy and the verbal definition offered was consequently simplified on purpose, so as to not add any additional unknown terms and to facilitate the focus on these two mimed actions. This example was not followed up during the SR sessions, which meant Elena's thoughts on this step of the mediation are not reflected in the analysis.

It is noteworthy how, unlike other excerpts showing NVB mediation practices in the classroom, the question that initially prompted this mediation (and the consequent translation offered) goes from English to Spanish. This was the only time a translation into Spanish was observed.

The nonverbal communication in conjunction with paraphrasing in this example is key to conveying the meaning of the term in a way that students could understand it and relate it to their own knowledge. If the teacher had relied only on the translation, students might not have recognised the words *delgado* or *gordo* as part of the same lexical field, although the teacher did not continue the conversation by expanding on the meanings of these adjectives.



Figure 30. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 17

### Excerpt 18: *Agujero*

During the final classroom observation with Elena and her 11 students, they were working on the use of connectors in Spanish, such as *debido a* and *por*. The students were completing sentences with different connectors, and sentence number 6 in their books read: *el agujero de la capa de ozono está aumentando ...* (the hole in the ozone layer is getting



bigger ...). Students completed the connectors well, but the teacher stopped to ask students if they understood the meaning of *capa de ozono* (ozone layer) and *agujero* (hole).

01 **Elena:** *Sí, también. ¿Ah ... la 6?*

02 **S1:** *Está aumentando*

03 **Elena:** *AUMENTANDO*

04 **S1:** *Aumentando a causa de ...*

05 **Elena:** *Vale, a causa de, correcto. ¿Algo diferente?*

06 **S2:** *¿Por?*

07 **Elena:** *Por, correcto.*

08 **S3:** *Debido a*

09 **Elena:** *Debido a, correcto. Muy bien ¿Todo el mundo sabe lo que es la capa de*  
10 *[ozono? ((at the same time as saying ozono she lifts her right hand up to the*  
11 *height of her head, then holding and moving the hand from front to back bending*  
12 *her elbow as if emphasising the creation of a layer)))]*



Figure 31. NVC: Elena miming 'capa de ozono' in excerpt 18

13 **SS:** *Ozone layer*

14 **Elena:** *Sí, y el agujero, [¿qué es un agujero? ((after asking the question, while*  
15 *students are quiet, she makes a gesture holding her hands in a circle creating a*  
16 *circular shape that is growing)))]*





Figure 32. NVC: Elena miming 'el agujero está aumentando' in excerpt 18

17 **S4:** The what?

18 **Elena:** *El agujero de la capa de ozono. ¿Qué es el [agujero?* ((she repeats the same  
19 gesture while saying *agujero*))] [*El agujero está aumentando* ((at the same time as  
20 saying *aumentando* she repeats the previous gesture of making a hole by holding  
21 a circle shape with her hands, however, this time she moves her hands even further  
22 away, expanding the circle and creating a bigger growing movement))]

23 **S5:** Hole?

24 **Elena:** (She nods) A hole.

In this case, the teacher initiated the mediation process when she decided to stop and ask her students whether they understood the meaning of *capa de ozono*, which was found in the sentence *El agujero de la capa de ozono está aumentando*. It was not a question about this new vocabulary from the students' side that triggered this intervention, as in most cases in the classroom observations. On the contrary, it was Elena who, after correcting what was the focus of this session (connectors), shifted the focus to the meaning of the context in which the connectors were used.

This excerpt presents the mediation of two different concepts: *capa de ozono* and *agujero*. Elena asked in Spanish about whether the students knew the meaning of the term *la capa de ozono*, with most of the question preceding any gesture. As she reached the end of the verbalisation, Elena enacted the meaning of *capa de ozono* by raising her right hand in a horizontal position as if touching a high layer in space while moving her hand from front to back. The focus of this first act of mediation was to help students interpret the linguistic meaning of *capa de ozono*, a term that can be seen as complex and abstract to mime. Elena mimed *capa* but not *ozono* since it seemed more feasible to mime it, despite having asked for both terms and starting the miming at the same time as saying *ozono*. The fact that



*ozono* and its English equivalent are cognates may have played a part in the teacher's decision to mime *capa* instead. This NVC alongside the language used to name the concept being mediated allowed the teacher to facilitate the interpretation of this meaning even if it was only partly mimed. The verbal support on its own could not have mediated the term as it did not provide any meaning, but in simultaneous combination with NVC this was possible by making the gesture relatable and interpretable. Likewise, the gesture with a lack of verbal support would not have built enough connections for students to understand what was being mediated as the characterisation of the *capa de ozono* was far from iconic and could be ambiguous to interpret. It is the relationship between the verbal and nonverbal actions that helped students join the connections and facilitated the construction of this mediation.

The students' reaction was an immediate translation of the word 'ozone layer' into English (line 13), which showed their understanding of this term. The teacher did not make use of any other strategies to continue this process, as the students' response showed it had proved to be effective, and she moved on to mediate the second unknown concept.

The second term that the teacher introduced was *agujero* (line 14), and it was first presented accompanied by a short question: *¿Qué es un agujero?* The indefinite article *un* did not offer any context to situate the unfamiliar concept. Elena waited until she had finished the question before trying to bridge its meaning clearly to students through moving her hands, miming the shape of a circular formation that was getting bigger. This ambiguous gesture – a growing movement which did not match with the concurrent verbal exposition *¿Qué es un agujero?* – showed how mediation can fail, when S4 expressed his uncertainty about this meaning, saying 'The what?' (line 17). Therefore, Elena proceeded to re-mediate by adding another layer of NVC preceded by a more elaborated question. During this second attempt, the teacher embedded the new term in a sentence that linked it to the previously mediated concept *capa de ozono* and emphasised the definite article *el* to offer better context for this term. When it came to the NVC, she did not elaborate with a different mime, nor use pointing or showing, but instead repeated her previous gesture with both hands miming a growing circle shape.

The noun *agujero*, now contextualised in a phrase *el agujero de la capa de ozono*, can be somewhat complex to act out with a gesture, but Elena tried again to capture the meaning of 'hole' with the same gesture. After a couple of seconds, when students did not show understanding, the teacher re-mediated the concept, repeating the same gesture while she said *el agujero está aumentando* (line 19). Even though she introduced a new term that could possibly be as unknown as the other two (*aumentando*), this seems to have helped to make the gesture interpretable. The key factor of the success of this third attempt at



mediating 'hole' is the verbal contextualisation that the teacher scaffolded and how the common understanding of the growing gesture as 'hole' was created to finally reach students. The effectiveness of this was shown by students' reactions, successfully translating the term into English.

Similar to what occurred with the previous term *capa de ozono* in this excerpt and also in the previous excerpt, soon after the teacher's last nonverbal intervention in combination with her verbal interaction, a student provided the translation in English (line 23), and this is how Elena checked the mediation through her gesture had worked. Elena helped students negotiate the meaning of the two terms with nonverbal strategies, drawing on the verbal communication aid of repeating the term in Spanish accompanying the gestures and contextualising it within the sentence that had been presented in their exercise. A final instance of the strategy of translation, at the end of this process, was used to bring both terms closer to students when she confirmed the meaning of the final term *agujero* in English through a translation (line 24), acknowledging that the students had the right association of this term with the English equivalent.

The fact that the teacher used several strategies to reach students' understanding indicates some of her attempts to facilitate the interpretation of this concept failed. Elena re-mediated the negotiation of *agujero* through scaffolding as part of this multilayering process of mediation, but it is not simply that. Elena helped and guided students by using a combination of multiple attempts of strategies that allowed her to create a shared space of understanding to interpret new meanings.

The use of NVC gave meaning to the linguistic form, allowing successful mediation, as can be seen in Figure 33, where the sequence of the connected layers for both concepts is illustrated.



Figure 33. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 18



## 5.2. Showing

The gesture of showing is similar to pointing (section 5.3), as both of them were used in the data to make reference to concrete nouns and involved making something visible. However, with the strategy of showing, the teacher can sometimes also touch an object with his/her hand during the class (although it is not necessary or an inherent part of showing), bringing an unknown concept closer to students by relating the new concept with realia present in the classroom. Teachers touched and presented personal objects, showing them to students to allow them to make links between this shared focus of the presented object and the new term. The NV category of showing was specifically used for concrete nouns, and teachers were observed using exclusively this NV strategy without combining it with other NV strategies.

### Excerpt 19: *Cartera*

Fernando was teaching four students in the first of the sessions where he was observed. One of the objectives of this session was to practice the conditional and subjunctive moods. Students were reading a text and underlining difficult words when S1 asked him the meaning of *cartera*.

01 **S1:** (She was checking her phone but stops to ask this question) Is *una cartera* a  
02 purse or a wallet or can it be both?



Figure 34. NVC: Fernando showing 'cartera' in excerpt 19

03 **Fernando:** ((He takes his wallet out of his left pocket as soon as he hears the word



04 *cartera*)), [I'd go for wallet ((grabbing the wallet with his left hand to show it to S1 he  
05 starts a shaking movement of the wallet, flagging it while saying 'wallet', which  
06 catches the attention of S1 and S2))], ¿de acuerdo?

07 **S1**: Wallet ((she nods and writes it down in her notebook))

08 **Fernando**: ((He puts his wallet back in his pocket))

In this excerpt, the teacher is asked to specify what *cartera* is in English (line 02), as S1 had looked it up in the dictionary and found two possible translations: 'wallet' and 'purse'. This question triggered the initiation of a mediation process where the teacher's first reaction was reaching to his own pocket and searching for his wallet as soon as he heard *cartera* from S1. This spontaneous and automatic reaction of linking the word *cartera* to the real and concrete object he had in his possession became the first mediation move of this instance. The gesture of showing an object with an insistent flagging movement allowed the teacher to offer a visual referent to the unknown term, which also captured the attention of S2. The NV action of showing interacted with the verbal action of offering a translation based on S1's options: 'I'd go for wallet' (line 04) in a concurrent way where each mode (verbal and nonverbal) elaborates on the same meaning. By showing an object that is known to the students, he made sure the unknown or less familiar word *cartera* was linked to a known concept in their own languages, such as the visualisation of a wallet. By placing a real object that represents the object and attaching it to the linguistic form of translation, the bridge is built from the known to the unknown (the meaning).

The use of realia has been extensively studied in foreign language teaching (McLelland, 2017; Spurr, 1942), but here Fernando is exposing an example of how to use a personal object to mediate. He also supported this showing with a reassuring translation into English 'I'd go for wallet'. Without this verbalisation, the gesture would not have served as the connection between *cartera* and Fernando's choice 'wallet' because the gesture showed a real object which could be referring to either wallet or purse. Regardless of the accuracy of the linguistic meaning mediated – given that *cartera* can indeed mean both 'wallet' and 'purse' – the teacher managed to help students interpret at least one of its meanings effectively.

The translation, as a response to S1's query, is effective as it achieves the connection between *cartera* and its English equivalent that S1 was looking for. The student's reaction proves this mediation process was successful as he got the student's attention, and she quickly nodded and showed she understood.

A few minutes after this episode, they started going through the text and Fernando reminded everyone what a *cartera* was by saying "*cartera* is what S1 commented, wallet". Despite



knowing how to translate it and having done it simultaneously with the showing, Fernando reinforced the meaning by using one more mediation, following a layering effect as has been recorded in most of the excerpts seen to this point. However, the correct translation of *cartera* was not truly offered, since it can actually mean both ‘purse’ and ‘wallet’. Perhaps the use of paraphrasing, as Elena did in excerpt 1 when mediating *cartera* and *carterista*, could have aided the completion of the creation of this unknown meaning for students.

When Fernando was asked to reflect on this moment during the SR session he said: “*También creo que cartera sería más difícil de explicar*”. Showing, in particular, can be a simple way to mediate nonverbally. In fact, this instance of mediation happened in the classroom, where teachers improvise ways of mediating. Fernando reinforced the NV showing of his wallet, because he had it at hand and he knew it had the potential to work, with a translation.



Figure 35. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 19

### Excerpt 20: *Cabello*

Elena was teaching how to give orders and advice using the subjunctive tense in Spanish (*te ordeno que ...*, *te recomiendo que ...*) during the final session in which she was observed. The activity required students to take roles (her mother, father, boyfriend, friend ...) to give her some advice with every statement she said (e.g., *quiero ir a la playa* > *te recomiendo que uses crema*). This role-playing exercise involved students in the context of giving orders, and they showed a very participative attitude. The statement she made in this excerpt was about her wanting to eat lots of meat from McDonald's. S2, who was playing the role of her mother, tried to say that this type of meat was horse meat, but she confused the word ‘horse’ (*caballo*) with ‘hair’ (*cabello*).

01 **Elena:** *Vale, muy bien entonces, quiero comer mucha carne del McDonalds, ¿qué*

02 *me decís? ¿Qué me recomendáis?*

03 **S1:** *Si...*

04 **Elena:** *¿Mamá?*

05 **S1:** *Yo te prohíbo que comas tanta comida porque no es muy sano, es*

06 *posiblemente que sea carne ... carne de ...*



07 **S2**: ¿De caballo?

08 **Elena**: CABALLO (loud, with her mouth open) No, ['cabello' es esto ((she grabs  
09 some hair from her head with her left hand as soon as she says *cabello* and holds  
10 it while moving it to show it to students until she finishes the sentence))), ¿eh?  
11 *Caballo* (well pronounced and slow). No creo porque caballo es caro, ¿no? La  
12 carne de caballo es cara, ¿no? [¿Carne de rata? ((gesture as  
13 if disgusted and laughing)))]

14 **SS**: Ahggg



Figure 36. NVC: Elena pointing at 'cabello' in excerpt 20

In this excerpt, there is no question about vocabulary triggered by students, but it is a vocabulary error that initiated the linguistic mediation of an unfamiliar word. The teacher realised the mistake S2 made when she said “[carne] de caballo” which means ‘hair meat’, instead of *de caballo*, which is what S2 intended to say, referring to horse meat. The familiar word *cabello* was confused with *caballo* due to its similar pronunciation: the students did not know the concrete noun *caballo*. Immediately after enunciating *caballo* loudly, Elena started the process of connecting the word *cabello*, which S2 used wrongly, with its real meaning. This facilitation took a nonverbal shape as Elena grabbed a lock of her own hair with her left hand and showed students what the real meaning of that term was while guiding this NVC with an indicative sentence *cabello es esto*. This type of gesture showed a real and tangible example of the concept which was as meaningful for her as it was for the students who could see the meaning clearly represented visually. Perhaps because this confusion among terms could create a serious misunderstanding, a visual strategy seemed to make a greater impact on students who could see their confusion at once right after the teacher touched and showed them her own hair.



The relationship between NV and V actions in this situation reinforced the meanings of each, since the simple NV action of Elena showing her hair would not be enough without saying what she was showing. The two modes of mediation were dependent on each other: the showing would have lacked significance if it happened as a sole strategy. Expressing verbally the reason for addressing students' attention to her hair with the sentence *es esto* made clear and unquestionable the links created to help students interpret the meaning of *cabello*.

This intervention is similar in some ways to excerpt 14, where the same teacher connected the gesture of treading on the grass with a deictic use of *esto* to direct students' attention to it. The expression *es esto* seems an important part of how this teacher connected NV strategies, whether miming or showing, with the verbal element and the success of this interaction to mediate new vocabulary. By showing this visual meaning of *cabello* through a nonverbal strategy supported verbally, the students could connect the shared idea of hair with the unfamiliar word *cabello* and be able to differentiate it from *caballo*, which has a very different definition even though its pronunciation is similar.

As it was seen in the previous excerpt that demonstrated the strategy of showing, there was no written form of support in this case either. However, unlike Fernando, Elena kept to the target language when directing students' attention to her hair – *cabello es esto* – and when she repeated the terms *caballo* and *cabello* with special vocalisation for students to hear the difference, which is a single vowel (A vs. E). A multilayer approach was once more considered necessary by the teacher, who relied on the simultaneous combination of NVC and V used to facilitate the interpretation of the term S2 used. This is the case with both excerpts analysed as demonstrating the mediation technique of showing.



Figure 37. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 20

### 5.3. Pointing

While pointing or deictic gestures can be done with different parts of the body (McNeill, 1992; Haviland, 2000; Goodwin, 2003), in the data for this study all pointing involved the fingers. By pointing at examples of realia nearby, teachers directed students' attention to some known meanings that were in their sight with the objective of enabling students to create new meanings. The use of shared space through pointing in education has been



discussed previously by authors such as Sime (2008, p. 272), who states that teachers use these gestures “to draw learners’ attention to a person speaking, an object or a task”. Pointing to a shared space to communicate new meanings can be accompanied by speech as an option, as in the example presented in this section, which shows the teacher supporting her NV action verbally. This same close relationship between NV and V modes happened with the other two types of gesture identified in this study, miming and showing. It is this relationship between pointing and talking that creates meaningful and personal connections with new meanings and facilitates their interpretation. There was no episode observed in the classes where teachers mediated only through pointing; the following excerpt includes it in combination with other NV and linguistic strategies.

### Excerpt 21: *Césped*

This instance of vocabulary mediation occurred during the first half of a two-hour face-to-face class with 13 students. On several occasions, the teacher (Elena) was asked for the meaning of words while students were working in pairs or groups as she walked around the class to monitor their work. On this occasion, she was asked for the meaning of *césped*. It shows Elena’s use of nonverbal communication alongside linguistic strategies triggered by S1’s question on the meaning of *césped* (grass).

01 **S1:** *¿Qué es césped?*

02 **Elena:** *Mmm ... A ver dónde está* (she looks at the book). [*¡Ah! El césped es eso*

03 ((she uses her left hand and with her index finger points towards the window as

04 she says *césped*. Outside the window there is a green space)), *por ejemplo*]



Figure 38. NVC: Elena pointing at the grass in excerpt 21

05 **SS:** (Students who are near the one who asked turn around to look where the  
06 teacher is indicating)

07 **Elena:** [*La hierba* ((she brings together her thumb and fingertips on her left hand

08 and continues to rub them as if touching and feeling soft grass with her fingers while

09 saying *hierba*)) *que está en la piscina, por ejemplo, hmm? Grass?*]





Figure 39. NVC: Elena miming the feel of grass in excerpt 21

10 **S2**: ¿Qué? (student from the other side of the room who was listening to this  
11 explanation)

12 **S1**: Grass in the pool?

13 **Elena**: [No, no dentro ((she brings her hands together, at the same time as saying  
14 dentro, and with her left hand makes a circle and brings the right hand close while  
15 showing inside the circle. Her right hand finishes inside the circle created by the left  
16 hand)) del agua].

17 **SS**: (Students laugh and S1 covers his mouth with his hand while laughing)

18 **Elena**: Las piscinas normalmente están rodeadas de césped ... ((she moves her  
19 hands in a semicircle motion starting with both hands going forward and ending  
20 with each hand and arm extended to both her left and right sides, as if she is about to  
21 hug someone. She is indicating surrounding a circular place)))

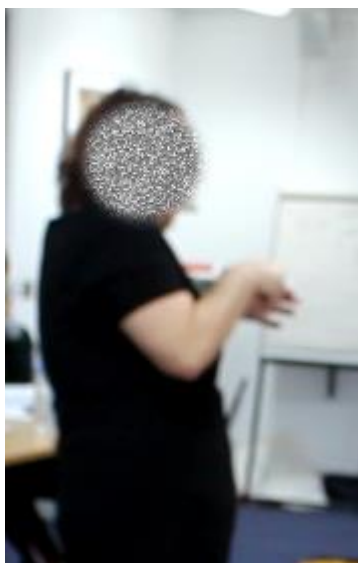


Figure 40. NVC: Elena miming the inside of a swimming pool in excerpt 21





Figure 41. NVC: Elena miming the surroundings of a swimming pool in excerpt 21

22 **S2:** ¿Qué? (the same student from the other side of the room who asked ¿qué? a  
 23 few seconds ago asks the same question again while she tries to listen to  
 24 the explanation)

25 **Elena:** *El césped, en el número ...* (she comes closer to S2 to point at her  
 26 book where the word is) *número 10. El césped en el número 10 [es la hierba* ((she  
 27 brings her hands together and closes her fingertips as if holding and rubbing an  
 28 object))]



Figure 42. NVC: Elena miming the feel of grass (second time) in excerpt 21

29 **Elena:** *Es por ejemplo [eso de color verde* ((using her index from her left hand to  
 30 point while making small circles with her left index finger, guiding students to look  
 31 towards the window outside))), ¿sí? The grass.





Figure 43. NVC: Elena pointing at the grass (second time) in excerpt 21

32 **S2**: Ohhhh ok (and she writes something down)

This excerpt is a fine example of multimodal mediation where pointing, mimed gestures and distinct verbal clues happen simultaneously. This teacher's use of the strategy of pointing, illustrated through this single example, showed an intention to connect the unknown with the perceivable world (known) for students. The multilayered sequence of mediation strategies used by Elena can be seen summarised in the following figure:

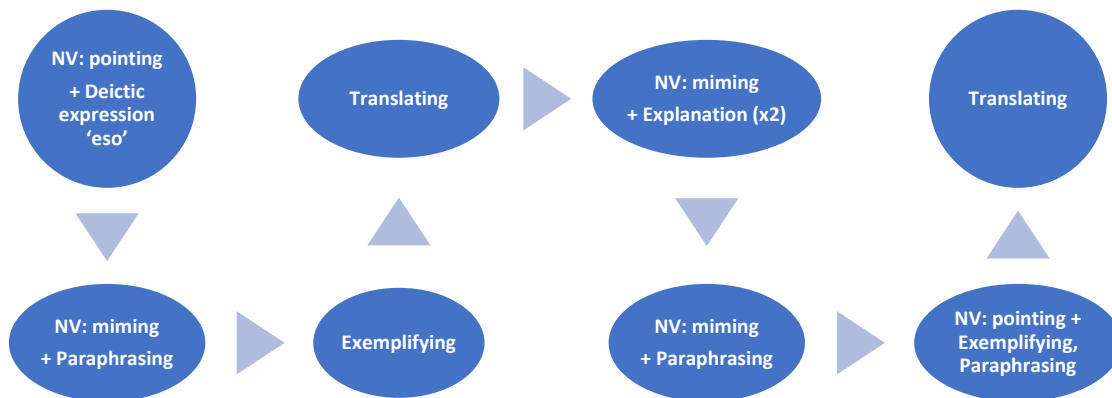


Figure 44. Strategies used by Elena in excerpt 21

In this excerpt, the teacher is observed making use of several strategies to connect the meaning of *césped* to students' realities, prompted by S1's question about the meaning of that term. The first strategy used by the teacher is to point to the window with her finger, where a green garden area was in sight, while simultaneously saying ¡Ah! El césped es eso. As Goodwin (2003, p. 239) declares, "sign systems containing different kinds of resources for construing phenomena, such as language and pointing, are used in conjunction with each other". The nonverbal strategy of pointing at a real-world object



available within the context, which students could relate to, entailed an attempt to bring the students closer to this new term. The teacher mediated between the unknown word *césped* and the known reality of the grass they could see outside by creating this shared focus of attention. It is important to acknowledge what else students could see through the window, as the *césped* was not all that the pointing could be directed to: there were trees, pavement, flowers, lamp posts, and other elements, which made the pointing strategy potentially ambiguous even though there was a big area of grass to be seen from the window and Elena made sure to point toward it from where she was standing. The verbal structure that accompanied the gesture *césped es eso* (line 02, Figure 38) represented a deictic verbal referent to the place being pointed at – McNeill et al. (2008, p. 118) refer to this as “co-verbal gesturing”. The verbal structure assisted students’ attention through the mediation as the simple gesture of pointing would have been confusing and not carried mediatory sense. Elena could have pointed at the green area without any verbal support, but she made sure her gesture was supported by relevant guidance verbally: Goodwin (2003a, p. 239) notes that “pointing cannot be explained by studying the body in isolation but must be seen vis-à-vis shifting backgrounds of settings and situated language practices that are themselves structured by activities and semiotic resources”. Despite this first mediation attempt, it was not sufficient to reach students’ understanding, as they were not sure where to look exactly since Elena’s actions were not more specific and did not take into account what else *eso* could refer to outside. For this reason, the teacher supported this NVC with another layer of strategies to continue mediating this new term.

Elena proceeded to complement the creation of this meaning by miming the feel of grass with her hands while offering a synonym of *césped*: *la hierba* (Figure 39). During this second combination of NV and V strategies, the teacher used a synonym as part of a paraphrasing strategy to accompany her gesture as she introduced this new element of how it feels to touch this object. However, she did not receive immediate positive feedback from students after those two attempts, and so she continued with a third mediation through a specific example, using this unknown term in the context of a swimming pool, when she added *la hierba que está en la piscina, por ejemplo*. One of the reasons the second and third attempts at mediation did not work may be because she did not indicate verbally what she was miming, which would have made the link between the gesture and the speech complementary instead of concurrent, she just touched her fingers assuming students would understand she was miming the feel of the *césped*. Then the example that she used to mediate involved a cultural assumption, as not everyone would think of a swimming pool when talking about grass, this would only happen in some cultural contexts. However, this mediation instance was more focused linguistically and the processes involved in



interpreting and reflecting on cultural boundaries concerned with the use Elena was making of 'césped' with the pool example were not activated.

Elena still did not see a positive response from students, so as a way to deal with these unsuccessful attempts, she used an English translation to help to negotiate the meaning of this word by saying 'grass'. It can be assumed that all students understood that translation; however, what seemed to strike students' attention was the preposition *en* in this mediation. Students reacted with 'grass in the pool?' and looked confused, prompting the teacher to attempt to mediate this linguistic misunderstanding.

The mediation of the grass not being inside but around the pools was elaborated through miming to demonstrate what her swimming pool example meant. She mimed a hole with her left hand and pointed at its inside with her right hand while explaining: *No, no dentro del agua*. This was supported by yet another gesture miming a big circle with her hands, accompanied by the explanation that continued: *las piscinas normalmente están rodeadas de césped*.

According to Daly and Unsworth (2011, p. 62), concurrent-equivalent relationships happen "since the ideational content corresponds across semiotic resources". Both verbal and nonverbal communication in this re-mediation showed a concurrent relation as the teacher used an iconic language-like gesture that symbolised her own words.

The teacher missed an opportunity to mediate the cultural aspect of the reasoning of her example, connecting her view of the world (which has grass around pools) with that of her students to overcome cultural mishaps, although she made sure the concept of grass around pools and not inside was mediated successfully.

Nevertheless, not all students reached that understanding, and S2, who was trying to follow this thread of strategies to negotiate the meaning of this unknown term but could not make full sense of it, attracted the teacher's attention by asking *¿qué?* (line 22). The way this teacher just mediated the term for S1, and those classmates next to him who had paid attention, did not intentionally involve the rest of the class although her verbal and nonverbal acts grabbed other students' attention. S2's question triggered a final attempt to mediate this term.

Elena recapped her actions of combining NV and V strategies while mediating the term again, for S2, although she first indicated what the discussion was about by pointing to the page in the student's book where this term appeared. This pointing action served to situate the student within the context where this word appeared but not yet to mediate. She started by paraphrasing *césped* with *hierba* again while miming the feel (Figure 42), but once again



on this occasion she did not offer an explanation for her mime of the feeling of grass. This relationship between miming and paraphrasing mediation acts was followed by the same pointing strategy used with S1, where the teacher pointed with her finger to the green area outside the window while reinforcing this action verbally, saying she was giving an example and paraphrasing the term with *eso de color verde*.

The finger that was pointing at the grass was supported by the deictic expression *eso* (that), and this word would lose its meaning if the gesture (Figure 43) had not been performed by the teacher. However, the fact that *eso* and the pointing action happened at the same time did not guarantee that S1 or S2 understood that the connection was to be made with the grass, even if Elena used verbal clues like the known term *verde*. Following her previous moves, Elena finished this mediation instance with the translation into English, 'grass', which was the strategy that proved partly successful with S1. While S1 had expressed his confusion with the pointing and miming strategies that had been used (line 12), S2 just confirmed her understanding at the end of this mediation performance once the translation was given (line 32). Elena's use of translation was backed by the student's feedback showing the success of this mediation process. It cannot be assumed that translation was the only effective strategy to mediate this concept, but perhaps it was the most direct one for S2 who exteriorised their understanding with the verbal cue *ohhhh ok*.

It can be seen that different strategies acted as layers to assist and complement each other. The use of many strategies built a unique activity of bringing the meaning of this new term to students in ways the teacher considered they could relate to, within the context of this specific class. The teacher made use of NVC repeatedly, using these strategies in different combinations and at different points of the mediation to assist and complement each other, and this can be understood as a useful resource at teachers' disposal. This is also a clear example of a highly collaborative instance of mediation where students were sharing their thoughts, insecurities and confirmations of understanding interactively with the teacher to be able to construct this meaning together. Students' contributions were key to the teacher's decision to re-mediate this noun twice, and her attention to students' reactions guided the process of this mediation.

The constraints Elena had to deal with to make this mediation successful include interpretative challenges that existed when the relationship between NV and V was not clear. Pointing at the window without a bigger verbal reference or miming the feel of the grass without linking it to an explanation were two examples of the challenges found in this mediation instance. Finally, another problematic point in the mediation was that the students



and the teacher did not share the same cultural expectations, represented by the problem of grass 'in' the swimming pool.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

Nonverbal strategies have been discussed as recurrent and significant actions that teachers use to achieve mediation in the FL classroom. The use of NVC – pointing, miming or showing – helped teachers to unfold meaningful connections between unknown concepts and the meanings those gestures bring through teachers' embodied actions. Some teachers in this study have shown a preference for linguistic strategies more than others, however with NV strategies, it depends on the possibilities that teachers have in the moment, and if they can connect to what needs to be mediated. While the analysis shows that this set of strategies are dependent on context, not just teacher's preference, of the two face-to-face teachers, Elena demonstrated a predisposition to using NVC as a mediation strategy in the data. Her personal attributes, beliefs, experience, the context of the class, and her environment may have affected this predilection. Not all of the observed teachers' gestures were categorised as mediation gestures or what the literature has called pedagogical gestures. As Denizci and Azaoui (2020, p.6) put it, "it is the intention leading to the production of these gestures" that makes them pedagogical, not simply the fact that teachers make them in the classroom. It is those instances of NVC that are used with the pedagogic intention of connecting different languages and cultures by bridging different connections from each point to help students interpret new meanings that were selected as examples of the use of NVC for mediation.

Teachers' repertoire of strategies is expanded with the use of NV strategies, which were observed working in combination with linguistic strategies simultaneously (NV+V) and sequentially (NV+V, V, V, NV, ...). As mentioned earlier, nonverbal and verbal modes are seen interacting with each other in this section. Daly and Unsworth (2011) studied the interrelation between visual illustrations and text modes and identified two different relationships: concurrency (when one mode elaborates on the meaning of the other mode) and complementary (when a new element is introduced using another mode). These findings showed a third relationship, where NV and V are identical, matching each other in meaning, such as with the *cartera* in excerpt 19, when Fernando attempts to verbally mediate the unknown term while showing the object. This differentiation can be applied to different ways in which NVC is interconnected with verbal communication and the excerpts analysed in this chapter considered this interplay in their analysis. Concurrent, complementary or identical support were often present in the same excerpt, as instances of mediation often have a multilayered nature and the same NVC strategy might interact with the verbal mode in different ways at different times during the process.



The context and space of the classroom were seen to be crucial for the teachers to be able to create meanings through the mediation strategy of NVC, as this depended on the availability of resources at their disposal. Since online sessions in this study did not include cameras, NV mediation could not be captured for Diana and Carmen, although it is possible that they might have chosen to use these strategies if their cameras had been on. This is why online teachers were not discussed in this section: the three nonverbal actions identified as mediation strategies were not feasible in their virtual classroom. A context-related decision can affect the performance of nonverbal strategies greatly, particularly the use of showing and pointing, because it depends on the availability of objects within their scope to which teachers can students' attention to start creating a common space of understanding. Miming is equally context-dependent as it assumes teachers and students have clear visibility of each other's gestures.

Therefore, it can be established that NVC identified as mediation is space-dependent, allowing teachers to make use of the space around them to look for common points of attention with their students. Had she been in a classroom without windows, Elena would not have been able to point at a green space when negotiating the term *césped*; similarly, Fernando could not have done what he did if he did not have his wallet in his pocket. Excerpts 16, 19, 20 and 21 validate the relevance of considering the space and context of the classroom as crucial to developing NVC as mediation.

Equally important is to take into consideration teachers' simultaneous talk while using NVC as mediation. As Sime (2008, p. 261) states, "teacher gesturing is adapted to the specific context of the classroom in the same manner that teacher talk is". It is through this connection between verbal and nonverbal actions that teachers have been seen helping students interpret new concepts. McCafferty and Stam (2008, p. 3) agree that "there is a close connection between language and gesture concerning meaning-making". When teachers were recorded using NVC as a mediation strategy, they were always performing it by bringing language and action into a relationship, whether that was through the use of a linguistic strategy or deictic expressions referring to the new concept. McNeill (1992, p. 245) talks about how "gestures, together with language, help constitute thought", and it is the assistance that teachers provided with their gestures linked to speech that constitutes not only thought but mediated intervention to facilitate the negotiation and interpretation of new meanings. Findings in this study corroborate this statement, as the excerpts analysed in this chapter show a strong relationship between verbal and nonverbal modes.

The interrelationship between V and NV is common to all excerpts here, enhancing this strategy with multiple options (e.g., NV miming and V paraphrasing happening



simultaneously in the final excerpt of this chapter where ‘grass’ is mediated, followed by V exemplifying, paraphrasing and NV pointing). There is a natural integration of NV into V and vice versa that helps mediation be effective by disambiguating meanings and guiding students through this mediation. It is not just what is denoted or described verbally (Radley, 2003) but what is expressed holistically through embodiment articulations that made teachers use NVC as a mediation strategy, able to bridge new meanings. When teachers used nonverbal strategies to mediate, they also used linguistic strategies of translation – excerpts 17 (*Engordar/adelgazar*), 18 (*Agujero*), 19 (*Cartera*) and 21 (*Césped*) – or explanations or definitions – excerpts 14 (*Ponerse*), 16 (*Mojar*), 17 (*Engordar/adelgazar*) and 21 (*Césped*). It is also interesting to point out the lack of personal experiences as mediation strategies (see chapter 6) in this chapter, which may indicate that teachers already consider that they are sharing an important part of themselves when enacting mediations physically.

The interconnection between NVC and speech is in semantic harmony, as Stam and Tellier (2018, p. 4) put it, as gestures often convey visual referents such as the size, shape, and trajectory more easily than speech. These visual referents are represented in excerpts 17 (*Engordar/adelgazar*) and 18 (*Agujero*), where Elena used NVC to convey size and shape. Not only the characteristics mentioned by Stam and Tellier are transmitted through gestures in this study’s data, but also features such as texture (excerpt 21, for pointing) and sound (excerpts 16 and 17, for miming). However, one of the risks in using NVC to mediate is that it can also lead to misunderstandings, and it may require re-mediation as those same characteristics (e.g., texture and size) are not always easily interpreted with gestures. Therefore, gesture and verbal communication are complementary and supportive of each other when creating threads to link meanings of new vocabulary in class. McNeill (2005) notes that this relationship between gesture and speech is not redundant but co-expressive, as they can express overlapping aspects of the same underlying idea but express it differently.

Moreover, the nature of NV mediation seems to include a verbal mode as an inherent part of it, since word and meaning could not be connected with just NVC. In the final excerpt of this NV section, when Elena mimes touching grass while saying *el césped ... es la hierba*, it can be seen that NVC is expressing the texture of this new concept *césped* through miming while overlapping with a synonym that expressing the same concept differently through paraphrasing, *la hierba*. Another example of a co-expressive relationship is seen in extract 16 (*Mojar*) when the teacher gives an example of a situation where she can get wet by saying *si llueve mucho ... me mojo* but at the same time, she is negotiating the miming



of an umbrella with her gesture, which adds overlapping ideas belonging to the same concept of *mojarse*.

In this study, teachers made use of NVC to mediate through pointing and miming regardless of the density of the lexical content. Both concrete or iconic and abstract or metaphoric terms were mediated through teachers' performance of NVC. Excerpt 18 (*Agujero*) represents a good example of the mediation of more abstract concepts, but despite the difficulty of representing the hole in the ozone layer with a universal iconic gesture, the teacher chose a nonverbal mode to bring students closer to this new meaning. A differentiation between concrete (iconic) and abstract (metaphoric) concepts has been supported in the literature (McNeill, 1992; Hargie 2018; Gordon and Druckman, 2018) when differentiating categories for NVC. But in the examples here, the choice of strategy (linguistic, nonverbal or indeed personal experiences, as will be presented in the next section) did not depend on the density of the lexical content, but on the preconceived associations that teachers had of such concepts.

Despite all the capabilities that the affordances of NVC have shown, there are some constraints found when it is used as a mediation strategy. Gestures performed by teachers are not always iconic and they have the ability to fail. Pointing is intrinsically ambiguous, and this is one of its limitations as a mediation strategy. Excerpt 21 (*Césped*) is a clear example of how NVC in the shape of pointing can fail due to some of its constraints for being an interpretative strategy: students try to follow the connections according to their own interpretation of the gesture. However, the data from the teachers presented here shows how verbal support is key to ensuring NVC constitutes a way to bring new meanings closer to students in a more effective way. In excerpt 21, the teacher used and reused different instances of NVC accompanied by different verbal support, and she repeated the same pointing that she initially used after having tried to re-mediate the negotiation of this term in different contexts and with different students. Not only pointing, but miming as well has shown some ambiguity in its implementation, even if in the cases in this data the teacher has managed to effectively undo the misunderstandings created by its limitations. An example was seen in excerpt 18 (*Agujero*) when Elena mimed the shape of a hole, and this generated uncertainty among students. Elena managed to bridge the meaning of the term by re-mediating the same mimed gesture but changing and amplifying the language used to accompany this gesture. Lastly, the strategy of showing has similar constraints – for example, in excerpt 19 (*Cartera*) when Fernando showed his own wallet, this gesture would have been misunderstood if it were not for its verbal support, 'wallet', as he had been given two options by the student and the gesture by itself would not help the interpretation of the meaning of *cartera* he wanted to facilitate.



As a result of these constraints and because some instances of mediation are not effective with the first strategy used, re-mediation was often needed in the data presented here, especially once the ambiguity of NVC has created misunderstandings for students. Bezemer (2014, p. 363) notes that “gestures are remade in different contexts using different gestural resources”, and this is demonstrated with every new strategy used by teachers in each excerpt. The data has shown that re-mediation is definitely used with NVC, and it is effective when gestures are remade in different contexts, as Bezemer states, but it is the verbal communication that accompanies the gesture that is needed to prove this re-mediation process successful. Example of re-mediation are found in excerpts 15 (*Pisar*), 16 (*Mojar*), 17 (*Engordar/adelgazar*), 18 (*Agujero*) and 21 (*Céspedes*), showing that the majority of uses of NV strategies were perceived by the teacher as requiring re-mediation. On the other hand, NVC alongside simultaneous verbal or linguistic strategies can work without re-mediation. Excerpt 14 (*Ponerse*), which used miming, and both excerpts 19 (*Cartera*) and 20 (*Cabello*) in the section on showing as mediation worked successfully on their own with just the simultaneous verbal support, as there were no signs of re-mediation nor the use of other strategies as further steps.

Combining strategies and the use of multiple layers to re-mediate the meaning of new words through NVC are extensively used across the excerpts that have been presented. As a consequence, the use of NVC and verbal support can be seen as a form of elaborated encoding (Porter, 2016), summarised in the figures at the end of each excerpt. These illustrations tried to capture the vertical but also the horizontal and sequential weave of strategies. The link between verbal and nonverbal communication discussed in this chapter presents the simultaneity of two strategies occurring at the same time (e.g., pointing and paraphrasing), one from the set of NV strategies and the other a linguistic strategy.

The compensatory role of co-verbal communication did not exclude or limit its use, but it was observed being performed synchronously with other strategies. The strong relation between all these strategies indicates the intrinsic layered characteristic of language teachers' mediation. This characteristic of the multilayered approach enriches the practice of meaning-making in the classroom and gives teachers different opportunities to continue with a mediation if they feel their previous attempts have not reached students. The use of linguistic strategies was combined with NV strategies in a great variety of sequences. Nonverbal strategies, at least pointing and miming, were often repeated within the same mediation act, with an identical or similar gesture – excerpts 15 (*Pisar*), 18 (*Agujero*) and 21 (*Céspedes*) – accompanied by different verbal communication. The strategy of showing, on the other hand, was performed once, not as part of a sequence of strategies, although it did have verbal support (translation in excerpt 19 (*Cartera*) and a simpler verbal support in



excerpt 20 (*Cabello*). This verbal support, distinctive for NV strategies as mediation, demonstrates the close relationship between language and NVC. None of the excerpts in this NV chapter showed simultaneous use of two types of NVC, since neither gaze nor head movements were found to be mediatory strategies, and pointing, miming and showing cannot viably happen at the same time.

This study does not intend to generalise about the use of mediation strategies, but to collect and investigate specific cases from four participants to be able to look more deeply into the mechanism of each mediation opportunity. Teachers mediate specific concepts to specific students at a specific point, which makes it a very precise and individual choice.

However, some commonalities can be seen, and the findings reveal that teachers found NVC helpful to mediate linguistic concepts, rather than cultural ones. The mediation opportunities that arose in the observed classes were linked to linguistic concepts (the meaning of the words *césped*, *pisar*, *mojar*, *engordar*, *ponerse*, *agujero*, *capa de ozono*, *cartera* and *cabello*). There are some implied cultural references in excerpt 21 (*Césped*), but the teacher focused on the linguistic aspect of the meaning of *césped* without detailing contexts in which this word would be useful and common in different Spanish-speaking cultures, even if the need for her re-mediation was partly caused by cultural assumptions she made when mediating.

The affordances of pointing, miming and showing for mediation in language learning helped students to interpret the meaning of verbs and nouns when new vocabulary arose in class. Teachers used NV strategies as a bridge to negotiate the meaning of verbs (e.g., *ponerse*, *mojar*, *engordar* and *pisar*) and concrete nouns (e.g., *cartera*, *cabello*, *agujero* and *capa de ozono*). In particular, miming was used by teachers mainly to bridge new meanings of actions or changes of state, as it was found in mediated the verbs *pisar*, *mojar*, *mojarse*, *engordar*, *adelgazar* and *ponerse*. Nevertheless, the use of miming for actions and verbs is not exclusive, as teachers also used miming to deal with the interpretation of concrete nouns (extracts 18 (*Agujero*) and 21 (*Césped*)). Miming provides different affordances for teachers to mediate new concepts constructed through the embodied nature of actions and more dense or less concrete nouns by working closely with language. The other two gestures used for mediation, showing and pointing, can be understood as NVB that implies less dynamic or energetic movements than miming, and they were used to mediate concrete nouns that can be seen and touched (e.g., *césped*, *cartera* and *cabello*). However, pointing was used as a final layer simultaneously with verbal support by Elena to mediate the verb *mojar*, which shows once more the variety and inclusivity these NVC present when used as mediation in a close relationship with language. No adjectives were observed as the focus



of NV mediation, although teachers made use of them as verbal support for gestures in the form of explanations and definitions that accompany NVB (e.g., the use of *gordo* to mediate the verb *engordar*). These results suggest that pointing and showing rely on external elements, while miming is an embodied action constructed with teachers' attributes and is not dependent on the physical environment of the classroom. Pointing and miming have appeared co-constructing mediation strategies, not simultaneously but as part of a sequence within a mediation opportunity (extracts 16 (*Mojar*) and 21 (*Céspedes*)), as in the example of *mojar* where the miming action of throwing water followed by pointing at a student helped to promote the interaction to involve students in this process and ensured a meaningful journey from an unknown to a known world. The object pointed at, the verb performed or the concept shown are made meaningful when an interaction with a verbal support is created.

The language used to accompany NVC in this process of bridging new vocabulary for students was predominantly the target language: Spanish. Students' primary shared language, English, was used in three of the eight excerpts to deliver complementary literal translations (excerpts 18 and 21) or to add explanations in English to miming (excerpt 16). Intralingual mediation is seen across all NVC excerpts which include Elena, which were always accompanied by verbal support in Spanish. Fernando's example of showing his wallet which was interlingual, English being the language in which the student asked about an unknown translation. In summary, the language of the mediation did not alter the success of the intervention, and it was a combination of Spanish and English that helped teachers build on the interpretation of new meanings.

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the impact of NVC as mediation on students, and whether they assimilated or used the terms that were mediated, because the focus is on the mediation actions of teachers. However, student feedback impacted teachers' mediation and re-mediation practices and also helped to give a sense of which processes were successful. Gordon and Druckman (2018, p. 91) defined external feedback about NVB as the receiver's verbal or nonverbal reactions to the encoder's nonverbal behaviours as interpreted by the encoder. This does not involve the receiver's (student's) actual interpretations of the sender's (teacher's) behaviour, but is information gained by the sender that his or her nonverbal behaviours have been received and evaluated. Reflection on the performance of NVC by teachers was not extensively collected in SR conversations, except those about excerpts 15 (*Pisar*) and 20 (*Cabello*). Teachers did not comment on the close association between NV and V in the SR sessions while watching themselves teach or afterwards. Teachers did not seem to pay much attention to their NVC, and there was just one comment by Fernando about his justification for showing his wallet in excerpt 19



(Cartera), among all the data collected. He argued how being effective and economical is one of the reasons to facilitate new meanings through this strategy, given the time pressures in the language classroom.

Nonverbal strategies have been overlooked from a mediation point of view, except by McCafferty (2002), who suggests that nonverbal communication, especially gestures, are a form of self-organizing mediation and are able to transform the teaching and learning experience by creating a shared space between interlocutors (the teacher and the students). This chapter has supported the idea of a shared space created through the strategies of pointing, miming and showing that facilitated the meaning-making of linguistic concepts. All gestures carried meaning and assisted in connecting unknown concepts to students' realities. Denizci and Azaoui (2020) studied the use of gestures in naturalistic instructional contexts in classes of French as a foreign language, and they determined that further research is required to delve into the issue of having interactive and topical gestures. Findings in this thesis have shown that gestures can be interactive and topical while being used for mediation. This is shown by the successful use teachers made of NVC to connect different mindsets in students with new ideas and concepts in a foreign language.

To conclude, nonverbal strategies have been clearly shown to be a valuable resource for mediating. Teachers use different types of mediation for the same concepts across the data of this study – for example, verbal strategies only or combinations of nonverbal and verbal strategies – and it is beyond doubt that the relationship among strategies contributes to the richness of the mediation process. As Jewitt (2014, p. 166) states, “it is the joint construal of meaning according to two semiotic modes (one mostly visual, one mostly linguistic) which produces the actual meaning-as-experienced”. Perhaps, if teachers were aware of empirical evidence showing how it is possible to create strong and meaningful links between the students and the target language and culture through NVC, they might be more attentive to the possibilities around them to make use greater use of such mediation strategies.

## **CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: TEACHERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES STRATEGIES**

One of the patterns that emerged in the analysis of the teachers' mediation practices was the use by teachers of their own experiences to assist in the interpretation of linguistic and cultural aspects. It is important to establish that mediation is not only about translating or teaching through scaffolding, “it is also an embodied process that draws upon a teacher's orientation towards his/her own language and culture”, as Kohler (2015, p. 193) describes it. The way teachers in this study used themselves as a resource to serve as examples of the target language and culture, to share their own cultures and languages with narratives



that bridge students' worlds with this new world of Spanish speakers, is a powerful strategy. Aden (2012) remarks on the use of personal comments that teachers make when performing formal linguistic mediation. This study analyses in depth what types of personal comments are shared and their relationship to mediation, whether linguistic or otherwise.

What are considered as personal experiences in teacher mediation in this study? Not all talk related to personal experiences can be categorised as mediation, but only those meaningful instances that encompass elements involved in the teaching of new language and culture concepts. By meaningful instances we can understand what Golombek (2015, p. 481) describes as "personal histories, emotions, experiences as language learners and teachers, beliefs, and knowledge". On that definition, Fernando, Diana and Carmen drew on instances in their personal experiences as language learners and users to mediate for the students. This strategy goes beyond the curriculum and expands students' realities, with teachers using their previous experiences and construction of self-awareness of different cultural norms (McConachy and Liddicoat, 2022). It also showcases their perceptions of language learning and linguistic norms as a way of mediating for students through the lived experience of mediating for self in the first instance. Teachers' experiences that are shared in the classroom have been called 'teacher experience talk' by McConachy (2018, p. 166), who argues that this area of enquiry is more than "simply a collection of things that have occurred in the past"; it is a learning resource itself that teachers articulate through their own lives.

It could be seen as natural to incorporate part of foreign language teachers' own lives into the classroom if this can facilitate negotiating new meanings for students. Chini (2001, p. 5) notes that "each of us, students and teachers (the majority unaware of it) build our evolution in a great part through our personal experiences". It is not only a question of building our evolution in language teaching and learning but more specifically when connecting two or more languages and cultures through these personal experiences. A critical approach inviting students to share theirs and signalling a clear link with the learning point is suggested through this mediation strategy.

This chapter examines six excerpts where teachers' personal experiences are implemented as a strategy to mediate in the classroom. The observed classes, their corresponding stimulated recall sessions and the final interviews provided the necessary data to illustrate the use of this strategy empirically and examine relevant teaching pedagogy beliefs of teachers.

The following excerpts are representative of the use of teachers' personal experiences as a strategy to mediate, in online and face-to-face classrooms. The experiences that teachers



mentioned when mediating refer to their students selves, their younger selves and themselves as L2 users, which closed the distance between themselves and their students and enabled bridges to be built to connect the known to the unknown. Three different categories of personal experiences were found: teachers' experiences as L2 students when they were learning not only English but other languages, teachers' experiences outside the educational context where some lived experiences are shared, and teachers' experiences as L2 users when living abroad as foreigners. In the first three excerpts, numbers 22, 23 and 24, both online teachers Diana and Carmen and face-to-face teacher Fernando brought to the fore their experience as L2 students to mediate successful learning tools for written assignments. The next excerpt, number 25, presents Fernando mediating new vocabulary through personal experiences lived outside the educational context. Finally, excerpts 26 and 27 show Fernando and Diana sharing their identities as L2 users.

### 6.1. Teachers as L2 students

#### Excerpt 22: Correct prepositions

This excerpt is taken from the second online class (with nine students) that was observed, where Diana was teaching how to prepare for the next written assessment. She was showing a slide with some self-assessment questions that students should reflect on so they could revise their essays before submission. The question she was explaining at this point was about using tools to self-monitor written language.

01 **Diana:** *Bueno una cosa con las preposiciones, yo por ejemplo siempre tengo un*  
02 *problema con el 'in' and 'on' en inglés, yo es que nunca sé cuándo se dice 'in' and*  
03 *cuando se dice 'on' porque como en español es 'en', pues yo siempre lo pongo mal.*  
04 *Y yo lo que hago cuando estoy escribiendo un texto y tengo tiempo es que yo voy*  
05 *a Google y escribo frases con 'in' and 'on'. Y yo veo cual es el uso, ¿ya? Pues lo*  
06 *mismo podéis hacer vosotros, sabes cuando ponéis en el ... en el browser pones la*  
07 *frase y os salen ejemplos con 'por' y 'para'. Por ejemplo, estoy pensando en 'por' y*  
08 *'para', sobre todo. Y entonces te salen ejemplos y te das cuenta si está bien usado*  
09 *o no. Es decir, que hoy en día con el internet es fácil buscar información. También*  
10 *tenéis Linguee, ¿no? que tiene muchísimos ejemplos que os pueden ayudar con*  
11 *cosas como las preposiciones, porque muchas veces con cosas como 'por' y 'para',*  
12 *muchas veces es difícil de verdad, saber cuándo hay que usarlo. Bueno, ¿alguna*  
13 *pregunta?*



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting window. On the left, a presentation slide titled "4 Autoevaluación (2/2)" is displayed. The slide content is as follows:

**2. Lenguaje: corrección, estilo y riqueza**

- ¿He incluido puntos gramaticales sofisticados y adecuados a este nivel, especialmente las formas lingüísticas presentadas en esta unidad?
- ¿He tenido cuidado con el uso de los tiempos verbales?
- ¿He hecho correctamente la concordancia de adjetivos y nombres?
- ¿He utilizado las preposiciones correctamente?
- ¿He usado un vocabulario adecuado, especialmente el vocabulario presentado en esta unidad?
- ¿He usado los conectores adecuados para estructurar este trabajo?
- ¿He usado un estilo correcto, en este caso un texto argumentativo?

On the right side of the Zoom window, there is a sidebar with two sections: "Attendees (15)" and "Chat (Everyone)". The "Attendees" section lists 15 participants, including one host and 14 participants. The "Chat" section shows a conversation where a participant asks for a citation and another participant responds with a link to a text on the internet.

Figure 45. Exercise followed by Diana in excerpt 22

In this example, the teacher was identifying a difficulty for students and suggesting her own experience as a language learner to overcome it. Diana started sharing an example of a personal struggle (line 01) and then proceeded to explain what she did about it (line 04). Sharing her experience of using Google to search for sentences including the prepositions she struggles with served as a bridge and midpoint to help students gain confidence and self-assurance with their language choices in their next assessment. She initiated this mediation by presenting herself as a language learner, sharing her struggles of learning English while drawing on her own experience when managing prepositions 'in' and 'on'. By sharing her issues – *tengo un problema* (lines 01-02) – in a language her students feel confident with, she adopted a shared identity with the students and built a bond with them from the start of this instance of mediation. Diana brought the students' realities as Spanish learners who are frustrated with the use of challenging prepositions such as *por* and *para* closer to her own frustrations with 'in' and 'on'. Despite being a native speaker of Spanish, who does not share the difficulties in assimilating this language that her students have, she shared a position as a language learner similar to her students when she learnt a new language (all participants are translingual teachers), and she drew on this example to create a bridge to enable students to learn an auto-evaluation skill.

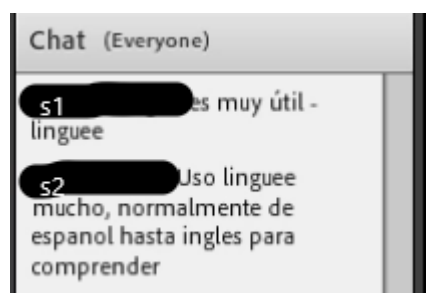


She continued this mediation by explaining the procedure of checking prepositions online. The teacher was not simply transferring her own knowledge of how to decide on what preposition is correct in a language, as she did not simply say 'use Google or Linguee'. She took action to step in and show her own learner experience as a mediation strategy to bring students closer to this technique of checking their prepositions online. She also used the first person singular *yo* frequently (lines 01-05), emphasising the fact that it was her very own story: *yo por ejemplo siempre tengo un problema con el 'in' and 'on' en inglés, yo es que nunca sé cuando se dice 'in' and cuando se dice 'on' ....* The mediation in this case was achieved by providing a model for solving problems based on her analogous experiences.

Diana chose an example of her own language learner self and explained it to students in Spanish, contributing to increasing their knowledge through dialogue, which set the basis for SCT of cognitive development. By showing herself as a model, she emphasised the idea of the more competent other, introduced by Vygotsky (1978), who claimed mediation is done by a more capable other. She had already experienced confusion with prepositions in her journey as an English learner and that made her more experienced. Instead of creating a layer of different strategies, her use of personal experiences as mediation embedded explanation and exemplifying as an eloquent part of this strategy.

The last empathetic sentence – *muchas veces con cosas como 'por' y 'para', muchas veces es difícil de verdad, saber cuándo hay que usarlo* (lines 11-12) – brought her mediation attempt to a conclusion. When Diana was asked to reflect on this moment during the corresponding SR session, she said "*para darles confianza, porque yo sé que a veces es imposible*". She was showing empathy towards her students, creating an emotional bond. Facing what seems an impossible situation at times, that of knowing which preposition is correct each time one is needed, she was trying to build a climate of trust by sharing her own experiences. Diana also built a trust climate by bridging her own language learner identity to students and being in their shoes. This affective aspect of her mediation created stronger threads between teacher and students, which can be beneficial to the process of bridging ideas and concepts in the classroom.

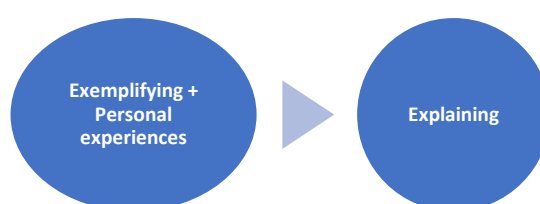




*Figure 46. Student responses in excerpt 22*

As seen previously, students' reactions are often a signal of whether a bridge is successfully created. Two students (S1 and S2 in Figure 46) shared their questions and opinion on how and why they use Linguee on the chat afterward, which indicates their engagement with this strategy, although the teacher added something new to their repertoire of uses for Linguee.

In summary, by using her personal experience, Diana not only modelled possible solutions for a problem through sharing successful strategies or tools for self-monitoring written language, but she also mediated affect in the classroom and how to mediate through this strategy, as can be seen in the students' responses. She decided to go beyond a transfer of knowledge and rely on her own experiences, choosing a meaningful, unique and personal episode of her process as a language learner to mediate the use of learning techniques through her own experience. The way she achieved this mediation was by positioning herself as a more successful language learner combining exemplifying with a personal experience, followed by an explanation.



*Figure 47. Strategies used by Diana in excerpt 22*

### **Excerpt 23: Creating a list for linking words**

In this excerpt, Carmen is teaching the final online session that was observed, and like with the last excerpt involving Diana, she is mediating a useful tool to improve performance in written work. Carmen was preparing students for the essay they would write in a few days for their final examination. She presented a slide with advice to follow before students submitted their work. In this case, Carmen decided to emphasise the sixth point on her slide, the importance of creating a list at the start of their exam with useful phrases they had



studied and wanted to include in the structure of their texts. The teacher shared her own experience with creating lists, to be ready for the written task in languages exams.

01 **Carmen:** *Incluso, yo les recomendaría a la hora de hacer el examen, y esto lo digo*  
 02 *por experiencia propia. Por ejemplo, si yo tengo mis conectores, 'sin embargo', 'por*  
 03 *un lado', 'por otro' ... todo ese tipo de conectores yo lo que he hecho en los exámenes*  
 04 *escritos que he hecho como estudiante es que los apunto al principio. En las hojas*  
 05 *que les darán para el examen entonces yo me voy escribiendo mis notas en mi*  
 06 *borrador para que no se me olviden esos conectores o esas palabras, esas frases*  
 07 *útiles que puedo usar para empezar mis párrafos, para unir las oraciones.*

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a presentation slide titled "Consejos antes del Examen Escrito" (Advice before the Written Exam). The slide contains a list of seven tips for students. A green arrow points to tip number 6. To the right of the slide, there is a list of attendees (8 total), including hosts, presenters, and participants. At the bottom right, a chat window titled "Chat 73 (Everyone)" shows two messages: "la salud" and a message from a participant saying "No quiero que chatees tanto" (I don't want you to chat so much), followed by another message from the same participant saying "Quiero que te cepilles los dientes" (I want you to brush your teeth).

**Consejos antes del Examen Escrito**

1. El examen será de la Unidad 5 o 6 de [redacted]: Repasa los temas principales de las Unidades 5 y 6 del libro y los materiales audiovisuales.
2. Usa el *Specimen Examination Paper*. Intenta hacer un examen escrito en casa controlando el tiempo (3 horas) y el número de palabras (450). Si no tienes tiempo, intenta escribir un mini-ensayo o un par de párrafos.
3. Tienes que practicar a escribir a mano 450 palabras para ver lo que tardas y también para ver lo que ocupa (¿2 o 3 caras de una hoja?). Es importante que sepas cuánto tardas en escribir las 450 palabras porque así sabrás cuánto tiempo te sobra para leer, planear y corregir.
4. Repasa tus TMAs y los consejos e identifica cuáles son tus puntos fuertes y tus problemas, especialmente en los TMAs escritos.
5. Revisa algún punto gramatical que tú consideres un problema. Concéntrate en uno o dos problemas, no intentes repasar demasiados puntos. Usa los materiales audiovisuales para hacer ejercicios de gramática y vocabulario.
6. Haz una lista de expresiones que son útiles para escribir ensayos, como los conectores y otras expresiones útiles para dar tu opinión, frases para introducciones, conclusiones, etc.
7. Repasa las expresiones de discurso indirecto para parafrasear lo que alguien ha dicho.

**Attendees (8)**

- Hosts (1)
- Presenters (0)
- Participants (7)

**Chat 73 (Everyone)**

la salud

[redacted]: No quiero que chatees tanto

[redacted]: Quiero que te cepilles los dientes

Figure 48. Exercise followed by Carmen in excerpt 23

The teacher was helping students to acquire useful techniques, mediating advice and tools to write a good essay and perform their best during their exams. She was indicating how to solve a problem that her students experience, using linking words in their essays. Once again, the way she helped them with this situation was by sharing her own experiences of this same problem when she was a language learner. Carmen chose to personalise her own experience from when she was a student by designing a specific tool, a list of the linking words that students were prompted to apply to their own writing as soon as they were given the papers for the test. Carmen constructed a problem common to her past



student self and her students' current reality while showing herself as a (more) successful language learner. This aspect let her make connections between the way she used those lists and the advice she was giving to students during this session.

The connection that was created helped to create a bridge where an unknown exam technique or learning tool for achieving success is mediated through personal examples. Thus, Carmen presented herself as a 'competent' language learner who had overcome the situation of preparing for a written exam and did not forget any linking words. Her personal experience of creating a list of words at the beginning of the exam (the object of this mediation) implied a successful solution.

Carmen presented her own experience as common ground, which helped students learn from a meaningful teacher's life experience that strengthened the mediation between the known reality of sitting an exam and the unknown tool for performing well of writing down in advance relevant linking words. Carmen explicitly and plainly stated that she emphasized that it was her personal experience by stating *por experiencia propia* (line 02). Her example of linking words in Spanish (line 02) and her explanation on how she used to create this list for a similar situation – *los apunto al principio, en las hojas que les darán para el examen* (lines 04-06) – were personalised.



Figure 49. Strategies used by Carmen in excerpt 23

As in the previous excerpt, this teacher also reiterated the first person singular pronoun *yo* repeatedly (lines 01-05), which allows her to frame her speech and perform this mediation from a personal view. By sharing her identity as a student (*que he hecho como estudiante*, line 04), she presented herself as a good model of a language learner. Carmen was giving a high value to the fact that this was a personal experience and that it could also inspire trust in the classroom using this mediation for affective purposes.

The common point that initiated this mediation grew from her experience as a language learner, and during the SR session, Carmen noted the importance of articulating her own experiences as a language learner: "*lo bueno es que yo he hecho exámenes de ese tipo como estudiante también entonces yo sé, también me pongo mucho en su papel, es decir como me sentía yo*". At a later stage, during the final interview, she revealed that she



actually studied a language course with the same online programme – “*el hecho de ponerme en su lugar implicó que yo hiciera los cursos de lengua [...] para saber exactamente cómo se sienten ellos*”. Her intention was to bond with her students, to empathise with them in a more precise way just by being in their shoes. Ishikawa (2017) includes teacher’s interiorised educational references, such as the teacher’s personal past experience as a student, in the set of tools or ‘teaching repertoire’ that teachers can use freely for transmitting knowledge. Carmen did not show an awareness of how sharing this part of herself could be positive for mediating unknown learning tools or strategies in the classroom during the interview or SR sessions. However, she did perceive benefits in gaining experiences as a language student, when she was able to create a strategy based on her personal examples and explanations.

On this occasion, there is no visible sign of student feedback from the mediation, because students’ nonverbal reactions could not be recorded and they did not contribute with anything orally or in written form. This is illustrative of a low collaborative example of classroom mediation, where students do not comment on or amplify the language learning strategy. This kind of practices does not impede the teacher to attempt mediation at supporting learning. It is interesting that what has been observed so far are teachers using their personal experiences from their time as language learners to mediate language learning strategies, rather than language content.

#### **Excerpt 24: Moving between the politeness levels of different languages**

During the first of Fernando’s face-to-face lessons that were observed, he discussed cultural differences in different countries with five students in his class, who were going on their year abroad the following academic year. Afterward, during the break between the two-hours of this session, students remained sitting checking their phones. The teacher heard how some students were speaking French, saying *je suis* ... and watching a video in French. He decided to move closer to them and joined in the French conversation by saying *Je suis le professeur* (I am the teacher) in French, which provoked laughter. He was getting their attention as he needed to give back some homework to one of the students who was laughing at the video they were watching. A couple of minutes later, Fernando shared how bad he was at learning German when he was a university student. That raised students’ interest in their teacher’s ability to speak different languages, and a conversation ensued with students asking him questions in English and him answering in Spanish. Just a few seconds later, a student asked him if he could speak French and he shared his story about a French teacher who did not use *tu* (you, informal) reciprocally, and as a consequence, that this teacher came across to Fernando as being ‘a little bit unpleasant’.



01 **S1**: Do you know French?

02 **Fernando**: *Francés estudié, pero ya más mayor. Francés estudié con el instituto de*  
03 *lenguas modernas de la universidad donde trabajaba antes, pero ahora mismo no*  
04 *recuerdo mucho. Hice como intermediate.*

05 **S2**: Ahh ok, ¿es difícil?

06 **Fernando**: *Es difícil sobre todo porque no tenía mucho tiempo, a veces no podía ir*  
07 *a clase*

08 **S2**: [Oh, ok (nodding)]

09 **Fernando**: *Pero era una profesora muy simpática, aunque la primera profesora de*  
10 *francés era un poco antipática y recuerdo que ella sabía español, y ella se dirigía*  
11 *a mí como tú, tú, tú.*

12 **SS**: Ahhhh

13 **Fernando**: *Y yo dije pues bueno, si ella me dice 'tututu' ((pointing towards himself*  
14 *with both hands)) a mí, yo puedo decir 'tu' ((pointing towards the front)) en francés.*  
15 *Y me dijo 'ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, [((authoritative gesture with his index finger)) VOUS']*

16 **SS**: Hahaha, yeah ... (smiling)

17 **Fernando**: *Y dije 'pero sí yo ...'*

18 **SS**: [Yeah, yeah ... (smiling and nodding)]

19 **Fernando**: *Porque además yo era profesor también en la universidad*

20 **S1**: Yeah, because for older people you need to use *vous* and they are really strict

21 **Fernando**: *Sí, en España vais a ver que no es así, como dijo Julián. El consejo es*  
22 *[escuchar ((he puts his left hand on his left ear))]. Si la persona usa tú, usa tú. Y al*  
23 *principio si quieres usar usted se puede usar. Pero vas a ver que por lo general*  
24 *usamos mucho el tú, tú, tú, tú.*

25 **SS**: Ahhh ok

26 **Fernando**: *Somos muy informales*

In this excerpt, Fernando starts by sharing the context of his experience as a French learner, having a conversation with his students about where he was enrolled, the level he did and how he found it difficult due to his lack of time. From line 09, he uses this building of a shared identity as a L2 student to move to mediating the differences between informal and formal 'you' (*tú* and *usted*, in Spanish), drawing on his own experience. It is not only the language that gets mediated in this excerpt but also culture, as the teacher explains the



sociolinguistic aspects of what is transmitted in both Spanish and French with the distinctive use of *tú* and *usted* and their French equivalents.

He chooses to mediate this linguistic and cultural content by presenting a personal story that captures a practical and real story from his life. As seen in the transcript, he is explaining about a French teacher who used *tú* with him but refused to be called *tu* (you in French) by him, and as a consequence is perceived by him as a not very nice person, *un poco antipática*. The reason was that even though she could speak Spanish, and Fernando assumed she could therefore understand the extended use of *tú* in the variety of Spanish in mainland Spain, she insisted on non-reciprocal use of *tu*. Therefore, Fernando is associating the use of the formal 'you' and the non-reciprocal use of informal 'you' with being too formal and even unpleasant when used among colleagues. He is sharing his perceptions of different ways that approaching people can affect the social relationship depending on the choice of *tú* or *usted* to help students interpret the impact of this choice. As Chen and McConachy (2021, p. 12) state about their own research,

Participants also revealed that the experience of difference politeness practices was a particularly salient trigger for reflecting on the cultural value of respect and how it is variably enacted in interpersonal relationships across cultures. This consideration became a resource for participants to themselves consider how to effectively mediate between their existing politeness repertoire and the practices they observed in the UK.

By mediating for himself (lines 09-19), Fernando had to reflect and negotiate his assumptions about formal 'you' in other languages and adjust them along the way. Students saw an example of mediating for self, followed by Fernando mediating the case with formal 'you' in Spain for them (lines 21-26). On this occasion, Fernando accompanied his story with nonverbal communication by reinforcing his narration with a pointing gesture while saying *tu* (line 14). Simultaneously, Fernando combined his personal experience with NVC while explaining (lines 13-19) how his French teacher used *tu* with him and so he assumed he could use *tu* with her since he was a University teacher too. The intention of pointing while saying *tu* signified a closer approach to address someone, which was very much linked to Fernando's preconceived idea of an informal use of *tú* among colleagues. A final NV communication was also observed when he mimed *no* (line 15) with his index finger while his teacher said *vous*, as a synonym of being authoritative and extremely formal.

Students, who were actively following his narration and showed understanding of why this was happening (line 18), were exposed to the teacher's interpretations of a situation they might have conceived of differently. His mediatory act of sharing this part of his identity



as a student of French allowed him to present his personal learning point from this mediation, that his assumptions on how to address his French teacher (using *tu*) were incorrect or differently perceived by his colleague (who expected *vous*). The French teacher was strictly applying a rule of politeness in the classroom, while he was behaving informally because he knew her without thinking of the context, and perhaps because, as he says in his conclusion, Spanish society has become more informal.

The teacher originally picked up on his students talking in French to share his experiences of learning other languages and create a common interest, which was endorsed by S1 questioning him about whether he knew French. Despite not starting directly with the mediation, it can be seen how this context prompted a propitious situation where mediation through personal experiences grew out of the activity as the participants were engaging and sharing mutual understanding about a third language. The teacher positioning himself as also being a learner who has difficulties with a foreign language and culture introduced a common ground, established through him having previous classroom experiences as a student of French. In this way, he managed to bring students and himself closer to facilitate the interpretation of *usted* and *tú* in Spanish, as the students could identify with this experience in French (lines 16, 18 and 20).

Students responded from the start by establishing shared experiences of learning French, they not only showed an interest to know more about the teacher's experience with other languages, but once he began his story, they quickly grasped the misunderstanding that had come up. The students' involvement in Fernando's personal narration included enthusiastic answers while nodding – 'yeah, yeah' (line 18) – and also that 'you need to use *vous* and they are really strict' (line 20), a final sentence where they ratified the knowledge that the teacher had produced from their own experience. What is more, Fernando went beyond scaffolding and simple collaboration in teaching, he made connections between individuals, that is between himself and his students, to make learning a unique process in which he brings his particular reality to the classroom to mediate between what learners already know and what he wants them to learn about him.

By showing a real lived experience where he had to mediate for himself when he was expecting a different use of the pragmatics in French with the use of a formal 'you', he is bringing the concept of moving between languages closer to students' realities. This concept can be problematic, as Fernando's example presents, but he showed a possible solution, following the pattern of the previous two excerpts, where teachers could be identified with being good models as L2 learners. Fernando did not use his own experience to intralingually explain linguistic aspects of *tú* and *usted* explicitly, by explaining for example



that *usted* is used with a third person singular verb while *tú* is second person, or the norm that formality is not reciprocal and is affected, for instance, by age. Nevertheless, the use of his own experience served as a support to mediate those concepts, concluding with a sociocultural generalisation – ‘we are very informal in Spanish’ (line 26) – and a general rule where he encouraged the students to listen and use *tú* if they are addressed as *tú*.

He performed this negotiation plurilingually, with S1 **having asked** a question in English which he answered in Spanish while making use of French at the same time. **Fernando did not only recognise the presence of three different languages in the classroom, but he moved beyond this multilingual vision into a plurilingual and translingual approach. He acted upon these languages by questioning and negotiating the necessary intercultural and sociolinguistic knowledge to mediate this example of formal ‘you’ in Spanish through a functional use of his ability to speak other languages shared with his students.** It is worth bearing in mind that the linguistic feature of addressing someone formally with a distinctive pronoun is lacking in English. Fernando used a third language to situate students in a common space (the French language) that serves as a mediation point of connection to understand this concept. As Kramsch and Zhang (2018, **p. 104**) states,

by bridging the gap between the familiar world of the students and the foreign world of the target culture, these narratives make the students practice their listening skills and give them a glimpse of foreign traditions and customs. But they are also each much more. The narrative mode enables students to grasp these paradoxes based on the common human experience.

It is this common experience of being a learner of French that enabled the teacher to bridge the gap between their familiar yet still foreign world with *tu/vous* and the newer and more foreign world of *tú/usted* in Spanish. It is that narrative that served as mediation. The contradictory and uncertain situation Fernando experienced when trying to move between his Spanish politeness features and those in his French class was examined more deeply and investigated thanks to the mediation of this paradox, and so it was successfully overcome.

Fernando was anticipating an experience for the students, as they were going on their year abroad in a few months, and he was asking them to be attentive and responsive to their future interlocutors: *vais a ver en España* (line 21). After mediating different levels of politeness through his personal experience as a French student, which he accompanied with two simultaneous strategies: NV and explaining, he finalised this mediation with an explanation in lines 21-24 about how to react in Spain. His personal experience enabled students to see a different perspective on the use of *tú*, as Fernando as a Spanish speaker



reacted differently to the alternation between *tu* and *vous* than an English student might. The teacher brought his own relational and affective meaning for *tú/usted* and the concept of moving between the politeness levels of languages closer to his students. He told his story in a way that meant students felt confident enough to interact and contribute to this example of mediation of the use of *vous* in French for a Spanish person.

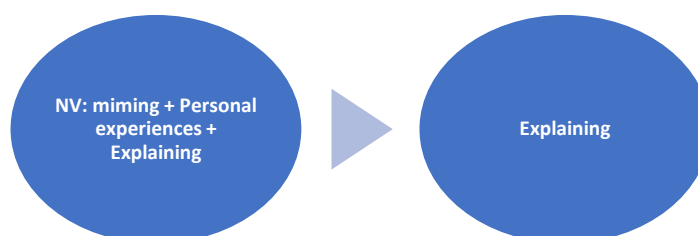


Figure 50. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 24

During the SR session he was asked why he used these personal examples in class, and he recalled that he did it because it was the break between the two hours, and that he usually kept these types of examples for those moments.

**Fernando:** *Sí esto también es en la pausa si mal no recuerdo, en las pausas les cuento las historias del abuelo Cebolleta. O sea que no es nada estrictamente académico, pero a veces cuando cuento una historia es una anécdota ...*

**R:** *Sí sí sí. ¿Y por qué? ¿Por qué crees que usas tú esos ejemplos?*

**Fernando:** *No sé, igual porque ... esto es simplemente la pausa, la pausa es small talk y también la uso yo de small talk con ellos.*

**R:** *Claro porque yo sí creo que estaban muy pendientes y que les interesa.*

**Fernando:** *No, también es eso, aprovechar al máximo, es eso que, aunque haya pausas si puedes extraer un par de minutos de conversación [...] en las pausas nunca vemos nada relacionado con la clase, a veces salen temas o me preguntan por algunas canciones y las pongo.*

The strategy of using personal experiences to mediate in the classroom is not acknowledged by this teacher as an important tool but rather as something which is not strictly academic nor related to the class (lines 02 and 10). He undervalues the act of using his story as a link to bring students closer to other realities in the target language, by saying it is a story *del abuelo* – a popular expression in Spanish that refers to someone who keeps telling old stories or tales repeatedly – as if it was endless talk with no great or meaningful outcome. His vision of using personal experiences as small talk might be limiting his potential to use them beyond a process of transferring information or knowledge in short communications.



Fernando repeated his conviction about using this particular strategy exclusively during the breaks several times (lines 01, 05 and 09), keeping it casual to build up a connection with them when it is more informal and relaxed. However, he was observed using this strategy as mediation during the break on only one occasion, and no other teacher used personal experiences as a mediation strategy during the break, only during class. This is a good illustration of how some teachers might not be aware of the full potential this strategy can have when interpreting different languages and cultures in a foreign language classroom, and therefore they relegate it to breaks or less important spaces during their classes.

## 6.2. Teachers outside the language education context

### Excerpt 25: *Friqui*

In this episode, Fernando had been teaching face-to-face for 15 minutes in the second of his observed sessions. The group was correcting some homework together, since only three students were attending that day. He was leading an activity where students had to give their opinions about nine statements (labelled a-i, see Figure 51) on what young people like doing. They were discussing a modified version of sentence c: 'I think young boys like video games more than girls.' Not only did the students share their experiences, but Fernando also commented on his experience, as a former university student. He used this chance to introduce a new vocabulary item that emerged from his story: the word *friqui* (geek or nerd).

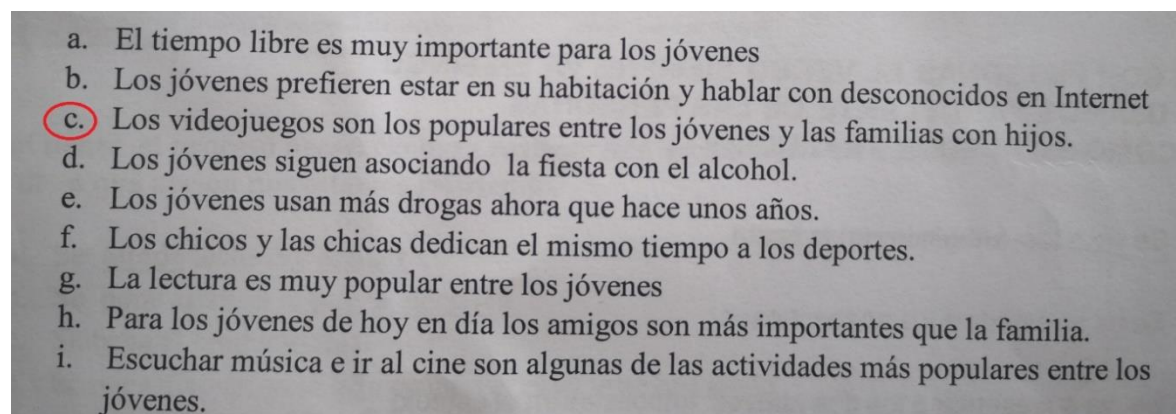
- 
- a. El tiempo libre es muy importante para los jóvenes
  - b. Los jóvenes prefieren estar en su habitación y hablar con desconocidos en Internet
  - c. Los videojuegos son los populares entre los jóvenes y las familias con hijos.**
  - d. Los jóvenes siguen asociando la fiesta con el alcohol.
  - e. Los jóvenes usan más drogas ahora que hace unos años.
  - f. Los chicos y las chicas dedican el mismo tiempo a los deportes.
  - g. La lectura es muy popular entre los jóvenes
  - h. Para los jóvenes de hoy en día los amigos son más importantes que la familia.
  - i. Escuchar música e ir al cine son algunas de las actividades más populares entre los jóvenes.

Figure 51. Exercise followed by Fernando in excerpt 25

01 **S1:** *Creo que están verdad porque hay los más usados son masculino, casi todos*

02 *mis amigos que amm ... juegan los videojuegos son ¿masculinos?*

03 **Fernando:** *Son chicos, ¿no?*

04 **S1:** *Hmm si*

05 **Fernando:** *Y a ti, ¿te gustan los videojuegos?*



06 **S1**: No

07 **SS**: (They shake their heads)

08 **Fernando**: *¿A ninguna? ¿Ninguno?*

09 **SS**: No (they shake their heads)

10 **Fernando**: [(He smiles put his right hand on his heart)) *Cuando estaba en la*  
11 *universidad* ((he adds the left hand on top of his right hand)) *a mí me gustaba*  
12 *muchísimo]*

13 **SS**: Hahaha

14 **Fernando**: *Era un poco el geek, ¿no? [que sería en español friqui* (he stands up to  
15 *come closer to the whiteboard and takes the cap off the marker pen)]*

16 **S2**: *¿Te gustaba juegos de guerra?*

17 **Fernando**: *Me gustaban los de estrategia*

18 **S2**: Ah ok (she smiles and nods)

19 **Fernando**: *Porque [ehhhm* (he writes *friqui* on the whiteboard)) *] cuando yo era joven,*  
20 *cuando yo era estudiante en la universidad, los ordenadores no eran muy*  
21 *avanzados, ¿sí? Era la época de ... pfff, 'Medal of Honor' no existía.*

22 **SS**: Hahaha

23 **Fernando**: *O sea que era muy, muy antiguo. Bien, ¿todo el mundo de acuerdo?*  
24 *Mónica, por favor ¿qué piensas de la D?*

The way the teacher was leading this activity was by generating conversation after each question to give students more opportunities to practice the target language and share everyone's opinions. On this occasion, Fernando expanded the conversation and asked his students' opinions about the statement that S1 had expressed. He took the opportunity to share a personal experience outside of any educational context, related to his like for video games, which offered a different vision on this topic, as opposed to the three students in the classroom who did not like them.

Fernando invoked his younger self, presenting himself as a video gamer when he was the same age as his students, which allowed him to create a personal link with them and so enable a closer relationship. He was not portraying the same identity that he did in the previous excerpt, that of a language learner, but he was talking more widely about his lived experience as a young person.



Fernando applied his prompting questions to guide the conversation towards the mediation of a new word related to the context: *friqui* (geek). His personal story alongside the miming gesture of loving something, as he said *en la universidad, a mí me gustaba muchísimo* (lines 10-11), established the context for introducing a new word. The nonverbal strategy was not mediatory, because *gustar* was not an unknown word he was trying to mediate, but it helped convey the emotions transmitted through the personal experiences he narrated, and it captured students' attention.

The introduction he gives on how much he loved video games was a necessary step to set the context for the mediated word: *friqui*. He used the English word (line 14) to describe himself, and then he translated it into Spanish immediately after, realising this may be an unknown concept to his students. The initial explanation about his situation as a younger person who loved video games, followed by the translation offered added simultaneous strategies to the use of personal experiences in this mediation intervention. He wrote the new word on the board so students could note this new term in their books. The teacher was facilitating the negotiation of a new word by translating the meaning of 'geek' into its Spanish equivalent *friqui* while making a personal connection between the English term, the Spanish one and his persona.



Figure 52. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 25

Personal experiences voiced to mediate new vocabulary, as teachers might tell a story in Spanish and mediate some unknown words through their shared experience, as occurs with the noun *friqui* in this example. Nessi and Gardner (2021, p. 66) review ways of vocabulary instruction, and discuss teachers following Fernando's actions here as he mediates:

in order to increase incidental vocabulary learning while listening to a story, teachers can put target words on the blackboard as they occur, point to them on the blackboard as they recur, translate them, define them simply, and encourage learners to negotiate their meaning with the teacher.

The negotiation of this meaning by students started when S2, who probably associated the word 'geek' with war games, asked *¿Te gustaba juegos de guerra?* (line 16). The teacher specifies the type of games he used to play – *los de estrategia* (line 17) – and he explained



that it was many years ago, so the equivalent video games that young people play nowadays did not exist. These remarks about his personal experience helped S2 create the meaning of *friqui*, and she is seen satisfied with this co-construction when nodding 'ah ok'.

As a result of Fernando sharing his own experiences, a participative attitude and a positive environment were observed during this mediation. Laughter was another student reaction; it emerged in the previous excerpts when Fernando used his personal experiences to mediate and foster a positive environment during the mediation.

During the SR session, Fernando explained why he took the decision to use this mediation strategy.

**R:** *Aquí les hablas de la pregunta de los videojuegos y les pones tu ejemplo de referencia personal. ¿Por qué usaste este ejemplo?*

**Fernando:** *Porque aquí empecé a darme cuenta de que no iba a dar mucho juego esa pregunta y lo que hice fue un poco pues dar un ejemplo yo me di cuenta de que podía introducir la palabra 'friqui'.*

Instead of passing to the next question in the textbook, because as Fernando commented, students did not have much to say about this topic, he improvised, sharing his own experience as a video game player to introduce a new meaning through his personal story. He became aware of the opportunity to present a new term at that precise moment and this shaped his mediation.

Based on classroom observations, one might infer that there was an explicit spontaneous story generated by the conversation they were having around the topic. However, Fernando maintained that he realised the potential of his personal experience to mediate thanks to the word *friqui* – although he does not call it a use of the personal experience strategy, but rather 'giving an example' (*lo que hice fue un poco pues dar un ejemplo yo me di cuenta de que podía introducir la palabra friqui*, lines 03-05). In all three aforementioned excerpts, Fernando demonstrated that personal experiences functioned as mediation; shared experiences became an opportunity to teach.

His reflection demonstrates his awareness of the opportunity to introduce a new word in linguistic terms, although he was not considering the relevance of using his personal experience despite it being a successful strategy in his mediation practice. Notwithstanding the fact that Fernando explicitly placed more importance on the linguistic aspect of this mediation, he was observed in practice to have a preference for sharing personal experiences, which serve as a bridge to connect new concepts to students.



In fact, there is actually one more excerpt that falls into the category of mediating through teachers' experiences outside an educational context. Fernando used his lived experience as a younger person to mediate the concept of *botellón* in excerpt 6, combining it with explanation and paraphrasing. This analysis can be found in section 4.2.

### 6.3. Teachers as L2 users

#### Excerpt 26: Intralingual diversity

This excerpt was recorded towards the end of Fernando's first observed face-to-face session. One of the students had left, and the remaining four were working on a task, during which they had to find eight related translations in a letter. They had recently mentioned the difference in the way interjections for laughing are written in Spanish and English and how different gestures can be shocking in other cultures. Within the context of identifying possible misunderstandings due to false friends in the language or in cultural behaviours, Fernando shared a story of his time working in the United States and how his expectations on the use of the language were not met. He explained how in the US, he was given an answer when he said 'thank you' that was different from what he used to hear in England, and how he understood the diversity that can exist within the same language.

01 **Fernando:** *A mí me pasó en Estados Unidos, cuando fui a trabajar ... Los británicos*

02 *decís mucho, cuando decís thank you, se dice you are welcome. Pero la gente en*

03 *Estados Unidos cuando dices thank you, te dicen uhmmmm*

04 **SS:** Hahahaha

05 **S1:** What?

06 **S2:** Why do they do that?

07 **Fernando:** *No sé, pero me sorprendió mucho porque cuando yo decía thank you,*

08 *decían uhmmmm...*

09 **SS:** Hahahaha

10 **S2:** What?

11 **S3:** Who said that?

12 **Fernando:** *Para que veáis que es diferente incluso en países donde se habla la*

13 *misma lengua*

14 **S2:** Is it in Spain, you know, that if you just go, like, 'hey, you ok?' and you just

15 walk off without saying 'fine' ... Is it in Spain they expect you to reply ... and have a

16 conversation



17 **Fernando:** *Ehmmm ... en España sólo esperan que respondan si por ejemplo yo te*  
18 *pregunto y digo, '¿qué tal?' y tú dices 'bien'. No pasa nada. Pero si te pregunto '¿qué*  
19 *tal?' y dices 'PFFFF mal'. Then they want to talk.*

20 **S2:** Ohhhh, I think it was in Italy then that they will want to start a conversation

21 **Fernando:** *Es igual en España, ¿de acuerdo? Decís 'hola', 'hola', '¿qué tal?', 'bien', ¿vale?*  
22 *Pero si '¿qué tal?', 'mal', es como 'vamos a tomar un café, let's go for a coffee'*

23 **S2:** Ahhh

Fernando mediated the sociolinguistic concept of how different cultures that share the same language can sometimes use that same language in different ways. The way he negotiated such a concept was through his personal experience, where he explained different ways of responding to 'thank you' in English. He explained how surprised he was when he did not get the answer he was expecting as he had studied the usual reply to 'thank you' as an English learner ('you are welcome'), so he was ready to use it in an English environment, whether that was the US or the UK. However, it was not enough to transfer the known meaning of 'thank you' and 'you are welcome' in communicating with people in that part of the United States. Instead, he had to learn to accept and assimilate the different answer of 'uhmmmm'. As Kramsch and Zhang (2018, p. 111) puts it, "by putting himself on the line" Fernando was able to mediate the entanglement of using the same language in different countries. Fernando conveyed his own process of mediation for himself when he encountered an unexpected response in English instead of 'you are welcome' in the US and he had to reinterpret the meaning obtained.

By explaining that he was talking about this - '*para que veáis que es diferente incluso en países donde se habla la misma lengua*' (lines 12-13)-, Fernando made clear what was being mediated; he was sharing his story about how diversity within the same language can create misunderstandings. It is not only a linguistic concept but also a cultural matter that is discussed in this instance, as social norms and context are essential when negotiating meanings. As Chen and McConachy (2021, p. 1) affirm, "based on critical moments in their communication experiences, teachers articulate the importance of broadening their own learners' perspectives on diversity within the English language and helping them develop cognitive and attitudinal tools to interact appropriately with diverse others". Fernando selected a critical moment in class drawn from his communication experiences in the past, when he was an English learner and lived in a foreign country, which helped broaden his students' awareness of the richness in English. By sharing his identity as an L2 user who was not confident with what he heard in a foreign language, he reduced the distance between himself and the rest of the class, who would go and live abroad within a few



months. Golombek and Johnson (2004, p. 309) corroborate the usefulness of this practice: “when teachers inquire into their own experiences, their inquiry compels them to question and reinterpret what they thought they knew”. This example guided students in understanding how it is not a good idea to assume the same language always acts in the same way or to generalise about a language used in different cultures.

In this particular situation, Fernando found some common ground with his students in that none of them knew this unusual response to ‘thank you’ that he had heard in the US. In addition, the students would probably have felt as surprised as Fernando in this situation, as can be seen through their questions ‘why do they do that?’ (line 06) and ‘who said that?’ (line 11). Fernando highlighted his identity as an English user who had to mediate different ways to convey the same meaning in a new English-speaking environment. By sharing a problem he overcame when living abroad as a foreigner years ago, Fernando presented himself as a more expert other, like Diana and Carmen in excerpts 22 and 23 in section 6.1. The connection he created with students was reinforced by his explanation that he is making them aware of differences within the same language (line 12-13), which was mediated through the strategy of drawing on his own experience. The mediating act of sharing a personal experience, where he achieved a knowledge of intralingual diversity, shows a real situation (problem) and a real outcome (solution).

However, while Fernando was able to highlight new meanings within the English language, he did not follow the conversation further by commenting on language and cultural variations within the Spanish-speaking world. This could have been an opportunity to mediate the Spanish version of different replies when saying ‘thank you’ in the language they are studying (e.g., *de nada* or *por nada*), and would have brought to a conclusion the idea of different varieties of a language in the context of greetings. This instance likewise demonstrates that the spontaneity of these mediation practices on the go and the absence of a plan to share his personal experiences do not always side with maximising contextualised learning. The students’ reactions of surprise and misunderstanding showed that they lacked the same cultural and linguistic knowledge as Fernando when he first heard that answer in English. The curiosity sparked by his personal experience (lines 06, 10 and 11) made this attempt more collaborative with the whole class, who engaged in an initial laugh (line 04). The distance between the unknown (intralingual diversity) and the known (a situation where misunderstandings happen when you are a foreign language learner) was reduced thanks to Fernando sharing this episode, which at the same time brought him closer to students’ realities.



Once Fernando summarised the purpose of this story, S2 engaged in a comment about another culture-and-language-related situation about greetings in Spain, which led Fernando to exemplify a situation that helped to mediate this concept. As a continuation, he provided one more example of mediating greeting expectations in the target language (lines 17-19). The success of Fernando's use of personal experiences to mediate concepts becomes evident with S2's reaction when she shows the connections with a new example of cultural diversity in Spain and Italy (line 20). As Gohard-Radenkovic et al. (2004, p. 219) point out, teachers as mediators "need to raise students' awareness of cultural patterns and prepare the students to embrace them in intercultural encounters". The teacher not only mediated the concept of diversity of culture and language within one language, but he also helped students reflect on their own processes to mediate for themselves. Discussing the concept of mediating for self, Liddicoat (2022, p. 48) claims that it "involves making meaning from instances of communication with others in which meaning was not initially apparent through a process of critical reflection on processes of meaning-making considering one's own perspective and those of others". In this sense, S2 started reflecting on a similar situation, despite being in different languages and not intralingual like Fernando's experience, where her expectations made her tolerant of different responses and so she could adjust her expectations to other cultural norms.

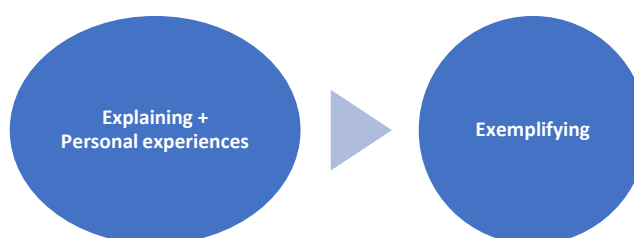


Figure 53. Strategies used by Fernando in excerpt 26

During the final interview, Fernando reflected about using examples from his personal experience in class.

**R:** *¿Usas ejemplos de tu propia experiencia [...]?*

**Fernando:** *Sí, creo que lo he hecho alguna vez. alguna vez hablé de como los regalos se aceptan en cada país o también por ejemplo la forma que tenemos de decir you are welcome. Que en Estados Unidos no se dice mucho, pero lo que hace la gente es hacer un hmmm [...] Sí, les suele gustar mucho, les parece divertido*

In this answer at the interview, Fernando is recalling a mediation example using his personal experiences to mediate linguistic diversity. This reflection implies that, when being asked, he was aware at the time that he used his own experience as a strategy to facilitate new



meanings when teaching. Notwithstanding his awareness and memory of these examples of mediation, he did not express how it helped to bridge students' worlds with the new world to which they are exposed in the Spanish lesson, but instead he highlighted the fact that they found it funny and liked it very much (line 05). Fernando was the teacher whose mediations through personal experiences were most frequent and all those cases involved humour and provoked laughter from students. A possible relationship between the use of this strategy and the awareness of its mediation effects might result in a deeper and more frequent use. Using personal experiences to mediate linguistic and cultural concepts seems to bring extra benefits as it can also mediate a positive environment where teachers and students form a bond in a friendly atmosphere of trust.

### **Excerpt 27: Spanglish**

In this excerpt, delivered by Diana towards the end of the second class she was observed with nine students on the screen, she is teaching online about the different realities of the Spanish language in the world, and showing a slide with maps of Spain, Peru and the US. The students' next assignment was to be on the topic of Spanglish. One of the students shared his very informed opinion on the use of Spanglish across the US and the teacher replied sharing her personal experience using Spanglish.

01 **Diana:** *Pero para mí una cosa muy interesante del Spanglish es que esa,*  
02 *esa ... manía peyorativa sobre el Spanglish a mí siempre me, me ... nunca estoy de*  
03 *acuerdo porque para hablar Spanglish muchas veces tú tienes que saber hablar*  
04 *español e inglés. Hay un artículo muy, muy interesante sobre cómo funciona el*  
05 *Spanglish. Yo por ejemplo hablo Spanglish en my, en mi casa, ¿eh? ¡Muchísimo!*  
06 *Yo hablo Spanglish ¡mogollón! Y me tengo que controlar cuando estoy dando clase*  
07 *para no hablarlo, porque en mi casa mi marido es inglés y él habla español e inglés,*  
08 *y yo también. Y hay ciertas palabras que suenan mejor en inglés que en español y*  
09 *estás hablando español y te sale la palabra en inglés, y la metes ¿ya?*

10 **S1:** *Es totalmente natural* (written message in the chat)

11 **Diana:** *Pero la gramática es correcta, ¿ya? Simplemente usas palabras en español*  
12 *y en inglés. Y es tan fácil de hacer lo del Spanglish, ha, ha, ha, tan fácil que yo le*  
13 *tengo mucha simpatía al Spanglish.*



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a presentation slide titled "5 TRES REALIDADES DEL ESPAÑOL". The slide features three maps: Spain (España), Peru (Perú), and the United States (Estados Unidos). Below the maps, there are three numbered questions in Spanish:

1. ¿Qué sabéis de la situación lingüística en España? ¿Qué lenguas se hablan allí?
2. ¿Qué ocurre en Perú? ¿Qué otras lenguas conviven con el español?
3. ¿Qué sabéis del español en EEUU?

The right sidebar shows the "Attendees (15)" list, categorized into "Active Speakers", "Hosts (1)", "Presenters (0)", and "Participants (14)". Below this is a "Chat (Everyone)" window with the following text:

la cita en spanglish y luego las palabras inglesas traducidas  
 [redacted]: gracias  
 [redacted]: sí, chicano  
 [redacted]: sí, es totalmente natural

Figure 54. Exercise followed by Diana in excerpt 27

Diana was facilitating the interpretation of the use of Spanglish in the world through her own experience, defining what Spanglish means and how it is spoken and handled in her life as a L2 user. Her experience was from outside the educational context, like Fernando's mediation of *friqui* in excerpt 25 (section 6.2). However, this example is linked to a language context and more specifically to the use of Diana's L2. She started to mediate the concept of Spanglish by explaining her own interpretation of what Spanglish entails: *tienes que saber hablar español e inglés* (lines 03-04), *hay ciertas palabras que suenan mejor en inglés que en español y estás hablando español y te sale la palabra en inglés, y la metes ¿ya?* (lines 08-09) and *Pero la gramática es correcta, ¿ya? Simplemente usas palabras en español y en inglés* (lines 11-12).

She shared her beliefs about certain attitudes concerning Spanglish by saying that she does not agree with its pejorative critics (line 02). Diana's voice is expressed through the reiterative use of the first person singular *yo* (lines 05-08) during the account of her experience with speaking Spanglish at home. Through exemplifying (line 05) the two languages spoken at her house, she established a connection between Spanglish, which was the topic students had to write about, and her own life, where it plays an important role every day. She followed this strategy of drawing into her own life to bring this concept closer to the students so they could see someone they know talking naturally about it. Diana interpreted the use of Spanglish through her own lens and that led her to mediate a real



example of Spanglish spoken in a mixed-nationalities household, sharing her personal experience. She finally explained how she and her husband speak in Spanish when some words sound better in one language or the other (line 08), and how she believes that the grammar is correct (line 11) by **highlighting** their personal use of Spanglish.

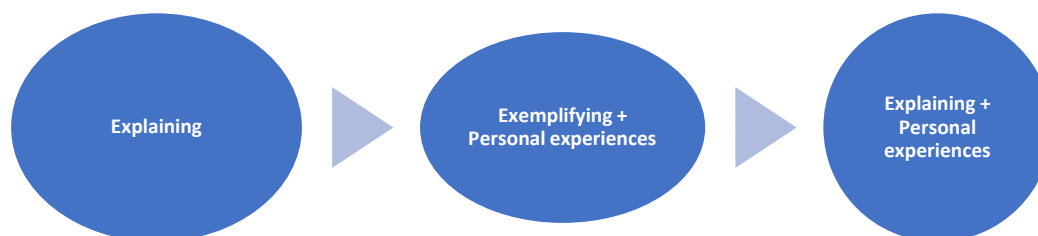


Figure 55. Strategies used by Diana in excerpt 27

During the corresponding SR session, Diana was asked to comment on this use of her personal experience as mediation and she made some valuable observations about this part of the class.

**Diana:** *Sí, sí, esta conversación siguió en el foro y Noemi dijo que muchas veces era laziness, era vaghezza. A mí me hace mucha gracia el Spanglish pero yo pienso que el Spanglish es un problema grandísimo porque si no prestamos atención el español va a perder muchísimo y el inglés va a dominar y se puede cambiar de lengua y de ahí al inglés. Y para mí es un problema, bueno yo hago la lista de la compra ‘pan’, ‘lentils’, y como mi marido habla español también y hablamos español en casa. Yo sé que es pura vaguería y yo soy muy consciente de ello de que no puedo usar Spanglish*

**R:** *Y ¿por qué usaste el ejemplo ese entonces en clase, el ejemplo tuyo?*

**Diana:** *Pues para decirles que es normal, creo, no sé, es que yo muchas veces hablo de mí, pero porque no conozco a nadie más que lo haga. Para decirles que es normal. Que de hecho Noemi luego dijo que ella también. Yo meto ciertas palabras en inglés cuando hablo español [...].*

Diana was sharing her experience as a model of a real situation where Spanglish is used, that is to say, she was opening a personal window of her life so students could get a closer look at the concept of Spanglish. S1’s intervention in line 10, where she empathised with the teacher and supported her by saying that it was completely natural, aligns with the empathy and affect seen in previous excerpts where teachers mediate using their own personal experiences. The relationship between teachers and students seems to be strengthened and teachers are encouraged to share more personal experiences once they make use of this strategy as mediation.



Diana's personal experiences can implicitly help students to develop intercultural understanding through their exposure to their teacher's reality and by being able to interpret a different way of life. As Beacco et al. (2007) note, it is the role of mediators to work towards this intercultural competence, which is crucial for students' development of mutual understanding.

This teacher places importance on the fact that presenting herself as an example of this new reality (Spanglish) will 'normalise' this unknown term (Spanglish): "*para decirles que es normal*" (lines 10 and 11-12). She was connecting herself with students by showing her reality linked to this new concept, hoping students would be able to access it more easily as it comes from their teacher's reality, a known source. The teacher is the common point where this mediation starts, therefore a bridge between students' realities and this new concept is built across her own experience. The empathy shown by S1 toward the teacher's lived experience with Spanglish revealed that she had crossed the bridge that was created and had the tools to create connections not only with the teacher but with a different and wider world where this unknown concept (Spanglish) is present.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

In these six examples taken from the classroom observations, Diana, Carmen, and Fernando were observed showing their explicit use of personal experiences as a strategy to mediate new concepts in the classroom. These illustrations are strong evidence of specific ways in which teachers' talk about their personal experiences can be a form of mediation. Monzó and Rueda (2003, p. 89) indicate that "experiences, beliefs, values and knowledge that diverse teachers bring to the teaching context are important resources for teaching and learning". These experiences that the teachers brought to the classroom have now been analysed in terms of their mediatory purposes. The teachers incorporated certain experiences and elements of their lives that are linked to learning, communication strategies and cultural differences to meaningfully bridge the journey from the known to the unknown.

This chapter has explored the types of personal experiences that are most used by FL teachers when mediating in the classroom and how teachers perform those. Teachers' use of their own lives to mediate have the commonalities of showing realities closer to students and challenging situations where their knowledge as L2 students (excerpts 22, 23 and 24), their experiences using a FL (excerpts 27 and 27) and their personal stories as younger selves (excerpt 25) helped bringing that unknown term closer to students. Those commonalities made it possible to categorise the sharing of personal experiences for mediation purposes into three types. There are episodes that relate to the teachers' lives



as language learners and as L2 users living abroad, and other experiences not related to language education contexts.

What teachers learnt during their time as language students provides a link to bring learning strategies and cultural and linguistic knowledge closer to their students. As Savva (2017, p. 276) confirms, “educators had gained real-life insight into the struggles involved in being a language learner through their own lived experience abroad”. The teachers employed these valuable accounts in their attempts to help students interpret new tools as L2 users and learners. By putting themselves in students’ shoes, teachers could connect with the known world to be able to accompany and guide the students through the journey into the unknown. Teachers also presented cases of their own personal lives when they were L2 users in different countries (Fernando’s discussion of different ways of saying ‘thank you’ in the United States) or current lived experiences as FL speakers in the UK (Diana’s account of using Spanglish at home). In addition, potentially unknown vocabulary could be mediated through lived experiences to create more meaningful connections between the known situation that the teacher explained (when he was a young geek) and an unknown term (*friqui*).

Teachers’ realisation that there was a need for mediation through the insertion of personal experiences was sometimes triggered by students, who asked personal questions to their teacher. At other times it was the material covered in class that triggered the mediation of a new concept, either related or unrelated to the planned session. Using shared personal experiences, teachers started a conversation where they contextualised the situation that was about to be shared and identified a learning point within their journey as language users to mediate using that strategy. This unknown learning point can be called a ‘problem’ or the object of teaching and learning at that point, and it was mediated through the teacher’s position as a learner. The example of themselves as good language learners, as models of language users or simply as what they were like when they were younger facilitated the teachers in offering solutions and approaches to the unknown issue that they had identified.

When teachers presented themselves as better language learners, by talking about challenging situations with a FL that they had experienced and successfully managed, they were perceived as the more expert learner in the classroom. This ‘good model’ theory can be applied when translingual teachers (native-speaker teachers who speak more than one language, as it is the case for participants in this study) mediate language learning skills in class. This activity has the benefit of modelling the teachers not only as good language models but also as examples for the language learners. Anderson and Lightfoot (2021) support this vision of translingual teachers who have the capacity to model effective



practices and encourage similar practices among their learners. The fact that teachers can be the more competent other and students perceive them as such makes this strategy powerful to be adopted for mediation. Students may connect not only with new meanings but also with the way their teachers first learnt or experienced such concepts, if the teacher's relationship with different languages and cultures is shared.

Mediating through personal experiences can have additional benefits, such as creating a climate of trust. The empathy showed in the aforementioned cases, not only by teachers but also by students, influenced the relationship built between them as this affective dimension brought them closer. Each student has their own personal reality, but teachers were observed using parts of their identity that they share with current students' realities to make connections. This process also invited students to think critically and actively collaborate with questions that show their interest in their teachers' personal experiences while contrasting them to their own. The capacity to mediating for self was clearly revealed by the teachers, who had done it successfully when they lived those experiences. Moreover, teachers' mediation practices helped students see examples of such mediations and empowered them to be able to mediate for themselves when they are on their own facing situations as language learners and users. Most of the excerpts that were selected to demonstrate this strategy of mediating indicated that the students were greatly interested in their teachers' experiences. In the case of linguistic and NV strategies, the students' responses were mainly questions about the mediated concepts, which served as feedback for the teachers to consider whether to re-mediate concepts. In the case of mediation through personal experiences, on the other hand, there was no re-mediation in the same sense, because students' comments primarily showed their interest in these stories, or were sometimes cues of the success of the mediation.

Explanation was present in every instance of mediation discussed in this section, as the structural part of mediation involved personal experiences that allows teachers to develop their own story. All mediations were delivered in the target language, with the exception of excerpt 25 where Fernando combined his personal narration with a layer of simultaneous translation of the unknown term (geek). Teachers' own personal experiences and knowledge showed a combination of cultural and linguistic objects (e.g., formal 'you' in excerpt 24 and the use of Spanglish in excerpt 27 were cultural; the new vocabulary in excerpt 25, the language learning tools in excerpts 22 and 23 and the issue of intralingual diversity and also the language use strategies in excerpt 26 were linguistic). These findings show how personal strategies as mediation have the potential to mediate interculturality through the context of the teachers' own lived stories with the languages and cultures that teachers have studied and experienced.



Based on the evidence presented here, personal experiences when mediating a new language and culture and its learning are used explicitly by teachers, who emphasised the personalisation of sharing such experiences. Teachers' recurrence to their own lives as the channel to mediate for students, who can be made aware of this strategy and equally create ties with their own experiences. As Kohler (2015, p. 195) affirms, "the greater the teacher's awareness of her own linguistic and cultural identity, the more she attended to the linguistic and cultural construction of the identity of her students". The data in this study has shown more than teachers' linguistic and cultural identity; it has proven that they are aware of themselves as language learners and users. With this informed and empirical evidence, where teachers can see this strategy as a useful resource in their toolkit, could empower them to use their own lives as midpoints between the new concepts they are teaching and their students.

It should be pointed out how teaching mode, online or face-to-face, impacted this particular strategy. Students' reactions giving feedback can help teachers understand whether mediation of this type has been successfully achieved and also provides evidence of the development of critical thinking by students. However, less speech (through their microphones or through chat) has been observed from students in online classes. In two of the three online excerpts in this section, there were no comments in the chat or questions asked aloud, nor did any student use the buttons to 'raise their hand' or give a 'thumbs up' sign. It was only during excerpt 27, where Diana mediated the cultural aspect of speaking Spanglish, that students interacted with the teacher during the online class and on the forums available after the class. Therefore, it appears that an online environment without NVC affects the interaction and involvement of students in the course of these mediations. However, having the system in place to continue the conversation after class in online forums can expand the benefits of this strategy by promoting reflection and the sharing of further personal experiences among students who have created connections with a previously unknown concept.

The potential of the personal experiences as a mediation strategy has been demonstrated in this chapter using the empirical evidence of how teachers mediate through their experiences while being reflective and drawing only on knowledge or events that are relevant for the students' new world of learning Spanish. Chen and McConachy (2021, p. 1) highlight "the facilitative potential of teachers' reflections on their own experiences in coming to formulate pedagogical ideals and concrete methodological possibilities". Taken together, the results suggest that there is a successful association between teachers sharing their experiences about tools for language learning and communicating or cultural differences



that are unknown to the students, and students' abilities to interpret new meanings through the connections created by this strategy.

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter brings together a concluding summary of the research findings, answering the initial research question and sub-questions that were disclosed in more detail in the previous chapter, together with a summary of the contributions, an analysis of the limitations of the present research, some future research ideas and a number of recommendations about the implications of the findings of this research for teacher training.

### 7.1. Concluding summary of findings

The analysis conducted in chapters 4, 5 and 6 has sought to offer answers to the question How do Spanish language teachers mediate in the HE classroom? Through the analysis presented in these chapters, evidence has emerged which answers the research question and sub-questions developed in section 3.2.1.

Regarding the specific strategies put into practice by teachers to achieve mediation, the close analysis has revealed three types of strategy identified as conducive to mediation. Chapter 4 presented significant examples of linguistic strategies as mediation practices in Spanish as a foreign language classrooms; nonverbal strategies were illustrated in chapter 5; and chapter 6 focused on the use of teachers' personal experiences as mediation. The results of this study provide us with further knowledge about how teachers can adapt and process this specific set of strategies when a mediation approach to FL teaching is to be adopted. Therefore, the evidence examined here can contribute to the creation of an empirical base of instances of mediation performed by Spanish language teachers in HE.

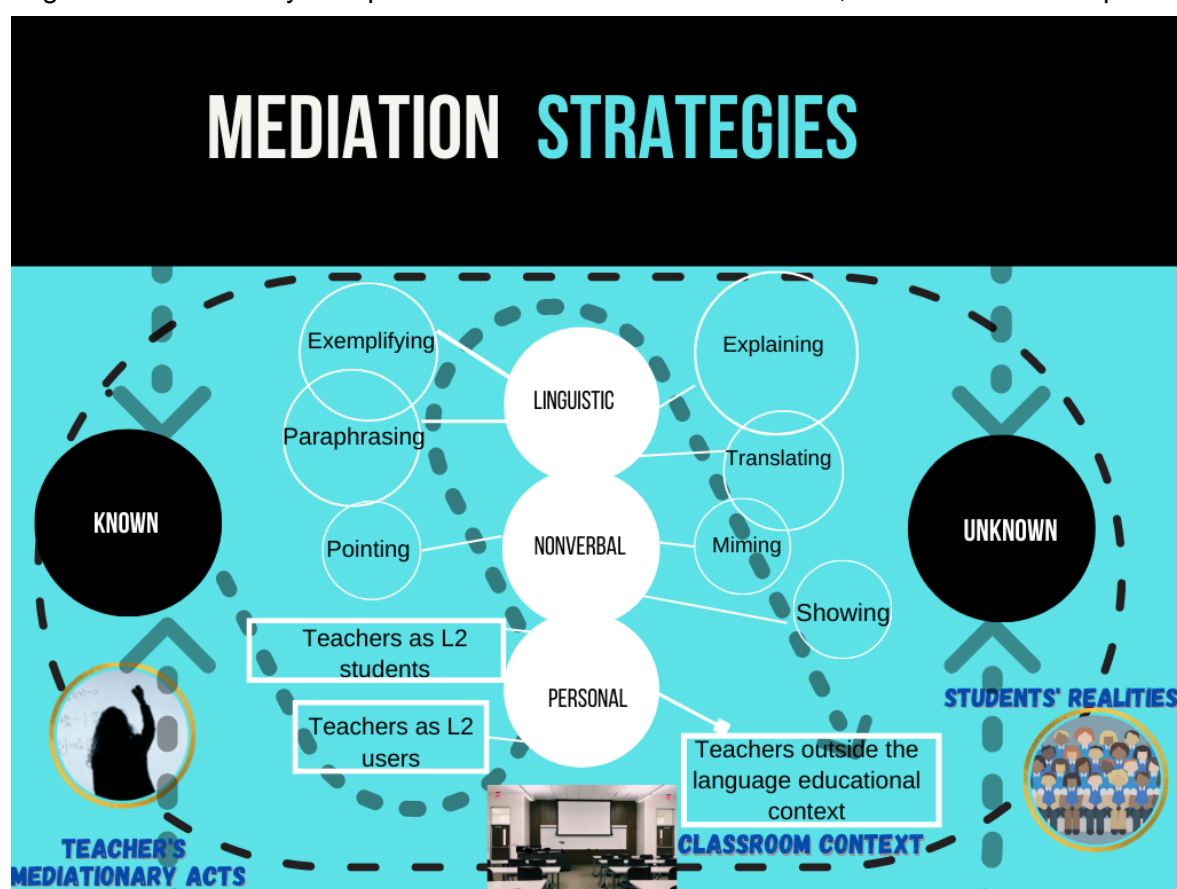
The instances of mediation involving personal experiences share some patterns with the linguistic and NV strategies, such as the finding of a shared space to mediate unknown realities. In the case of linguistic strategies, teachers identified a simpler word, an example, an explanation or a translation that students had in their repertoire to start bridging the unknown concept. With NV mediations, teachers identified the use of gestures and embodiments that students would recognise to start bringing the new term closer. When it comes to personal experiences mediations, teachers were observed identifying themselves with students and sharing their experiences of learning a new language, being a young student or using that new language, which served as a common starting point to build the bridge of mediation (excerpts 22 and 23).



The three categories and specific strategies found to be mediatory in this study are present in Figure 56.

*Figure 56. Specific strategies found to be mediatory in this study.*

A common affordance about the mechanism teachers activated when mediating was the dimensionality of strategies, which has been captured visually as a sequence in each excerpt where more than one strategy was followed. Those strategies that are presented next to each other horizontally took place one after the other, while those which happened simultaneously are presented vertically in the same blue circle, joined with a + sign – the latter was always the case when verbal and nonverbal modes of mediation were used together. The multilayered process can be considered as linear, since there is a sequence



of strategies following one another. However, strategies involving NVC are seen to always occur simultaneously with some verbal support and sometimes with other strategies. Identifying the different layers that occurred to create new meanings by teachers' actions of using personal experiences and knowledge, nonverbal or linguistic strategies portrayed the multilayering process as central to mediation performance. The heterogeneity of the combinations of strategies used by teachers in the excerpts shows the usefulness of personal experiences, linguistic strategies and NVC to mediate new meanings in the



classroom. Relationships among all three types of strategy were found in the multilayered instances of mediation.

Language teachers use these mediation strategies as a response to difficult points in the classroom or to the challenge of co-creating new meanings with students in the classroom. Teachers were able to mediate not only linguistic and cultural realities through these strategies but even learning approaches, by using their own experiences as mediation. The way in which the identified strategies were used was through the creation of a shared space, a way of constructing meaning and scaffolding from the known side of the continuum, which is shared by all participants in the mediation to the unknown side, where a new concept is being interpreted with the aid of these strategies.

The verbal component of these strategies, performed orally, is a common pattern that accompanied also NV strategies. The teachers were not observed performing any written mediation: they relied on their voices to share some part of their identities. Oral mediation (as opposed to written mediation, for example) was the main medium used by teachers in their mediation moves in both the online and face-to-face classrooms. These findings therefore contributed to filling one of the gaps identified in the literature, the lack of research on oral mediation.

The selection of strategies to mediate language and culture is a personal and unique process, as is teaching in general, with different teachers having different styles. However, the choice of strategy is also highly contextualised, as it depends on the space where teaching is occurring, the environment, whether the teachers are expressive people who use NVC when they speak, or whether they are willing to share their lives or not. The findings suggest that teachers have a preference in terms of which strategies they prioritise, as seen in the discussions at the end of each strategy. One of the observations about each excerpt is the level of collaboration from students, which varied from low if they were actively listening but did not engage, to medium if they intervene with short comments such as nodding, through to highly collaborative when students share their understanding, the difficulties of the unknown term or ask further questions. Mediation is conceived as a two-way system that involves both the teacher and the students interacting and activating their knowledge. Teachers guide students into the unknown through these strategies and, once they have been successful, students are transformed by the new knowledge that is created through having crossed the bridge of mediation. The transformation occurs when the student understands a concept that was unknown before the mediation.

An examination of the lesson plans provided by teachers shows that none of the observed mediation resulted from a planned use of strategies or an intended identification of new



tools or unknown concepts to mediate. Teachers did not stop to reflect on the examples before they entered the classroom. The instances of mediation identified respond to problems that were perceived in the moment, where teachers' capacity to improvise mediation arises. It is noteworthy to contemplate the possibility and benefits of anticipating mediation opportunities in the classroom. An examination of the extent to which planned mediation would truly work is not one of the aims of this thesis, but it is an object of study that could bring benefits to a fully conscious use of mediation by teachers. Actively recognising a wider awareness of the range of strategies that are accessible to and attainable by teachers allowing them to bring students closer to new concepts effectively could also be explored as beneficial knowledge that might encourage the use of mediatory strategies.

The purpose for which each strategy was used has been found to be either language focused, culture focused or both. On one side, sociolinguistic aspects of the language and cultural knowledge appear to be mediated through personal experiences. On the other, linguistic and NVC strategies seem to have more linguistic affordances instead, although teachers were also seen mediating cultural connotations at times and missing them at other times. The awareness of these cultural and linguistic assets depending on the strategy carried out is key to understanding how they function to make a well-informed use of each strategy depending on the focus of the mediation. Moreover, the focus of the mediation revealed in each of the selected excerpts was linguistic when it was students who prompted it; on the other hand, teachers were observed mediating cultural knowledge, learning strategies and also linguistic aspects of Spanish when they initiated the mediation. Agar (1994, p. 28) supports an indivisible connection between language and culture in teaching, stating that

language builds a world of meanings. When you run into different meanings, when you become aware of your own and work to build a bridge to the others, 'culture' is what you're up to. Language fills the spaces between us with sound; culture forges the human connection through them. Culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture.

Mediation strategies allowed language teachers to build such bridge to students loaded with new language-and-culture-related meanings, despite a focus on one or the other depending on the unknown concept. This occurred because the pace of the class and teacher's context or preferences for mediating did not always allow to mediate both language, culture and learning strategies in one same attempt.



Since teachers sometimes knew whether specific students had additional knowledge about the topic covered or not (see excerpt 6 in section 4.2 and excerpt 24 in section 6.1), they prompted the student to initiate or continue the mediation, demonstrating how a more advanced student can also be a good model for others.

In addition, teachers identified moments where mediation was needed in different ways. Sometimes teachers assumed a concept or idea was not part of students' repertoire and this initiated a mediation strategy to attempt to bridge the unknown to the known. At other times, teachers were encouraged by students, who raised questions or expressed hesitation at key moments that teachers then identified as requiring mediation. One of the direct benefits of having information about students' prior knowledge is an ability to recognise mediation opportunities and perform mediation more effectively. Thus, teachers' decisions of when to attempt mediation may be directly linked to their students' previous knowledge, activating the connections with existing knowledge in a more effective way.

Relying on students' prior knowledge can of course seem out of the teachers' control. Teachers' decisions when mediating relate to students' personal and professional experiences, thoughts, links, their own personal and professional experiences, linguistic and cultural curriculum and the context of the classroom. Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (2000, p. 305) state that this kind of context, which can be spatial or curricular, can be a fundamental contributory explanatory variable, since "the context is as important as the action". Nonetheless, this prior knowledge, prior experience or current context does not always go unnoticed and can be activated if the teachers are aware of it. If teachers believe that a mediation can bridge meaningful connections from the students' worlds to the target language and culture, they will be more likely to use it. The impact of knowing teachers' beliefs about their practice in the classroom shed some light on justifying their use and lack of use of mediation strategies.

An important aspect of teachers' mediations was their ability to pay attention to students to judge whether a mediation had been successful with on its first attempt or whether another attempt was needed in a re-mediation. Examples of students' reactions included expressions of confusion (*¿qué?*), understanding (*ohhh, ahmm*) or misunderstanding (students repeating the same question that prompted the mediation or laughter in excerpt 21), which guided teachers in their classroom decisions about mediation. Judging the response to the mediation process can be used to adjust the mediation or repeat it using either the same or different strategies, depending on the teacher's interpretation of learners' understanding and their responsiveness in the classroom. Re-mediation has been examined in this study from the teacher's point of view, a process that occurs after an



evaluation of students' understanding when teachers assess their next move. The analysis has shown how multiple attempts at mediation by teachers have sometimes occurred without a clear reaction or specific feedback (be it verbal or NV) from students; teachers themselves decide whether an iterative process is needed, based on their criteria.

Another common pattern found in the majority of the excerpts in this study is humour, often observed through laughter. However, it is worth noting that "the relationship between mediation in the classroom and humour can be considered as anxiety distension and reduction which favour learning positively" (Sanz Ferrer, 2019, p. 406). The multifaceted character of mediation is indeed further enriched with humorous elements that seem to be present in teachers' and students' interactions, although the impact, benefits and use of humour have not been analysed in this study.

Finally, one important difference that could have affected the way participants in this study mediated was the teaching mode. Online excerpts were found to have less interaction from students than face-to-face excerpts, and this had an impact on how much feedback teachers received from students and their ability to evaluate whether re-mediation was needed or not. This finding is supported by Carmen (one of the online teachers), who during the final interview stated that she thought it was a bigger challenge to teach online because you need to base your decisions on students' reactions, but you do not see the students face-to-face (as they were not using the cameras). However, she mentioned how having online teaching experience provides a teacher with skills to understand students' reactions and perceptions of learning points. She did not specify what skills those were, but the findings do show that both face-to-face and online teachers use two of the three sets of strategies (NV strategies are not found in online mode), and they all contributed to understanding how the process of mediation is shaped.

Teaching using mediation strategies offers teachers and students a thorough learning experience. What is important is not how many strategies teachers implement, but ensuring that they monitor and re-mediate their interventions with additional strategies until they are clear that the message is successfully negotiated. Nevertheless, it is paramount to delineate what strategies are available to use and, more important how different types of mediation are performed. Real-world examples providing teachers with an ability to reflect on the conscious use of mediation and to be aware of the mechanisms available to connect the new concepts of the Spanish-speaking world with students' realities. If one understands practice in sociocultural ways, then teaching is more complex than just providing isolated explanations, gestures or personal stories. Using mediation – and in particular layered and coordinated strategies – can help teachers engage in meaning-making with terms and



concepts in Spanish that are new for their students. As Liddicoat (2022, p. 49) says, a “focus on the processes involved” is what is important to understand mediation. Acknowledging the range of strategies can lead to more informed and richer use of the mediation of language and culture in the classroom. Making teachers conscious of the processes of mediation is therefore a valuable contribution to language education.



## 7.2. Contributions of the research

This thesis aimed to investigate the different strategies used by foreign language teachers to achieve mediation, and to consider how teachers applied those strategies to facilitate this mediation in online and face-to-face classrooms. The answers to the research question: How do Spanish language teachers mediate in the HE classroom? have been discussed throughout this thesis and are in this section, grouped under the three sub-questions.

### A) What specific strategies are used by teachers to achieve mediation?

During the face-to-face and online Spanish lessons, certain language and culture issues were observed either by teachers – who believed that students did not have the relevant knowledge or checked this with the students themselves – or by students – who directly asked teachers about those issues. This study found that the mediation strategies which teachers naturally tend to implement when bringing their students closer to new concepts could be classified into three different types: linguistic strategies, nonverbal strategies and personal experiences strategies.

Using language strategies to mediate was common among participants. Thirteen excerpts from the classroom observations were analysed and the principal and specific strategies of this type were paraphrasing, explaining, exemplifying and translating. Teachers used different layers of these strategies, and they also combined them with strategies of the other two types (nonverbal and personal experiences). Teachers' use of similar words, clarifications within explanations, and examples of concrete and non-literal translations (linguistic strategies) helped expand students' vocabulary. The findings show that paraphrasing, explaining and exemplifying were adopted as initial strategies, and that teachers tended to leave translation for the final attempt in case the previous mediation strategies had not been successful enough. However, translation was not always a successful strategy, and when teachers perceived that a mediation attempt had failed, they made use of multiple strategies and re-mediated the process. It was the overall composition of instances of mediation that created new meanings through language.

Since video cameras were used in the face-to-face classes, it was possible to analyse teachers' gestures in terms of their mediation purposes. Three nonverbal communication strategies of mediation were identified: miming, showing and pointing. NVC was observed to happen in conjunction with and simultaneous to verbal mediation, which sometimes consisted of simple deictic signals like *esto* and at other times involved other mediation strategies (either personal experiences or linguistic strategies). Eight excerpts from the classroom observations were analysed, and it was found that teachers used this type of



strategy primarily to mediate verbs and concrete nouns rather than more abstract concepts, as those might be difficult to represent with iconic gestures. Despite the confusing nature of iconic gestures, the connections that were made between the gestures, the verbal utterances and the context resulted in this being a successful mediation instances. The mediations were strongly dependent on the context in which they occurred, as teachers took advantage of what they had at hand to link it to the mediated concept. Spontaneous decisions from the teachers often led to mime, show or point, which seemed to work effectively as mediatory activities, based on students' feedback. Because of the style of teaching adopted in the online classes, no cameras were activated, and so nonverbal strategies of mediation were observed only with the face-to-face participants.

The Spanish teachers used personal experiences as mediation in both teaching modes, online and face-to-face. The part of the teachers' identities that was shared with their students was their selves as language learners, as L2 users, or as younger versions of themselves outside the educational context and together with the learning points they had encountered when living in a new world. The analysis showed that the teachers mediated specific words, concepts or terms but also mediated learning strategies and cultural differences. The idea of serving as a model for students was very present in the six analysed excerpts, as teachers showed something of their own lives in an attempt to connect the students with new realities. Vygotsky's idea of the 'competent other' came to the fore here, where teachers shared their own experiences of tools for language learning. The findings showed how the use of this type of strategy for mediation made clear teachers' awareness of themselves as languages learners and users. The findings in this study also prove that teachers can embrace their identities as foreign language learners and users to mediate not only culture but language inside the classroom. Using teachers' personal experiences to bring new meanings closer to students while tapping into individual's lives makes these mediation practices more significant.

#### B) How are those strategies being used?

The use of mediation strategies by Spanish teachers has been found to be subject to spatial and curriculum aspects as they are very context-dependent. As Liddicoat and Derivry-Plard (2021, p.4) observe, "any act of mediation is highly contextualised and highly dependent on the circumstances in which it occurs". The analysis of the data showed how, for example, Elena made use of linguistic and nonverbal strategies when explaining the term 'grass' in Spanish. This was possible for her not only because of the space in which she found herself in the classroom (which included the presence of grass just outside the window), nor just



because this word appeared in one of the exercises that formed part of the language curriculum, but also because of her own experiences with this term. One of the ways she chose to mediate was by using a connection between grass and swimming pools as a strategy. Therefore, according to these findings, it can be confirmed that teachers settle upon one strategy or another depending on the spatial and other resources they find in the classroom and the context of the topic they are teaching, integrating students' previous knowledge and their own experiences with the target concept or idea to be mediated. Golombek and Johnson (2019, p. 26) indicate that

what makes mediating at an individual's upper limits challenging is that individuals have their own social situation of development – the historical and immediate conditions, including affordances and constraints, of their lived experiences. Through mediation, and by acting in and on the social situations in which they are embedded, individuals transform what is relevant for their own motives and contexts of use.

The 'individuals' in this study are the language teachers, and the transformation that Golombek and Johnson propose can be seen in the teachers' actions based on their own spatial and curriculum context, their students' previous knowledge and their own experiences in their mediation practices.

The use of mediation through these strategies as midpoints between students' realities and the unknown create a share space where meanings have the potential to be created. These connection points comprise knowledge shared by both students and teachers, such as different words or examples (linguistic strategies), gestures (nonverbal strategies) and similar lived situations when the teacher was a language student (personal experiences strategies), which are used to scaffold until the unknown is reached with the support of teachers' use of mediatory strategies.

The analysis showed the mediation performances by teachers were multilayered, and they used multiple and in occasions simultaneous mediation strategies to build a bridge to create new meanings for students. A simultaneous use of strategies and alternation of them interchangeably built the necessary steps towards an overall mediation. The mechanism followed by teachers consisted of a continuous embedding of one strategy after the next and connecting them with the identified language or cultural issue until the teacher considered students had interpreted the new meaning competently.

Mediation is successful when it addresses the learning need presented in the context, not when it addresses all potential possible things to be learnt about a word. Depending on the results of teachers' mediating actions, they considered re-mediation. Teachers did not make



sporadic or isolated use of mediational strategies, they followed their process and evaluated students' feedback received. This attentiveness to the success of their mediation moves was key in the continuation of them by re-mediating the journey between the known to the unknown.

C) To what extent do teachers mediating in different teaching modes differ from each other?

With the exception of nonverbal strategies – the online teaching observed in this thesis did not use cameras – all other strategies that have been identified (linguistic and personal experiences strategies) were observed in both teaching modes. Had the spatial context been visible in the online teaching (through turning on their videos), it is likely that nonverbal strategies would have been used there as well. There was no significant differentiation found in terms of the processes activated by online teachers and face-to-face teachers as the ways to mediate discussed in the previous sub-question were used by all participants.

However, the data has shown fewer examples of students asking teachers for the meaning of new vocabulary in online sessions than in face-to-face ones. There was in fact less collaboration by students in online sessions than by those attending face-to-face seminars in Spanish. Dao and Iwashita (2018) distinguish two types of collaboration from students, and in their terms, online mediations in this study have been shown to be less highly collaborative than face-to-face mediations. The reasons for this could include the spontaneity factor that is more present in face-to-face environments, easier access to checking the meaning of a word online in online environments, and the potential embarrassment of taking the floor in online environments. Nevertheless, mediations were still recorded in online classes, and there is no data showing they were less effective because of lesser student interaction. Teachers regulated their re-mediation options based not only on the feedback they received but also on their own expectations of whether students had crossed the bridge of understanding the unknown. However, nonverbal rapport from students perceived by teachers after mediating (Grahe and Bernieri, 1999) was found in face-to-face learners who confirmed in this way their understanding of a new concept being mediated. It is therefore fair to conclude that the importance of nonverbal cues in judging students' feedback to guide possible re-mediations and the lack of such cues in the online environment had an impact on online teachers.

A final summary of contributions evidenced in this research is offered:

- Elicitation of a mediation corpus by teachers in online and face-to-face Spanish lessons in HE. Providing empirical evidence of Spanish teachers mediating orally in



class through analysed excerpts represents a first-hand corpus of mediation instances. This selection of observed mediation performances is an essential part in the study of how mediation between the known and the unknown can be performed. Future studies on such practices can benefit from retrieving detailed documentation of mediation mechanisms activated by FL teachers, providing authentic occurrences.

- Proposal of a categorization of mediating strategies with illustrative examples coming from the excerpts analysed in the body of this thesis. The identification of three categories (linguistic, nonverbal and personal experiences) of strategies including paraphrasing, explaining, exemplifying, translation, miming, showing, pointing, teachers as L2 students, in situations outside the language educational context and teachers as L2 users. Through identifying and analysing common patterns of mediation used by these Spanish teachers, accessible and specific ways to create meanings are recognized.
- Multilayered documentation of simultaneous strategies occurring in different settings, always subjected to teachers' capacities and context to elaborate on mediation through linguistic, nonverbal or personal strategies. The success of mediation practices by teachers resulted not in the use of the strategies identified on their own but on the combinations that teachers carried out when sequentially and simultaneously put in practiced these strategies.
- Acknowledgment of teachers' capacity of re-mediation due to their attentiveness to students' reactions and feedback. This attentiveness from teachers to students and to their previous knowledge was also beneficial to promote and initiate mediation instances. The dimensionality of different layers accompanied teachers in those re-mediation actions when one strategy was not enough as it was found in the majority of the cases. Re-mediation but also mediation in general have been proved to have an oral and unplanned nature when teachers performed it during class.
- A constitution of an avenue for pedagogical implications addressing teachers' opportunities to reflect on their mediating actions during class. Lallana and Salamanca (2020, p. 190) claim there is a need to develop programmes for L2 teachers that can "motivate teachers to question themselves as individuals and to view the world around them with sensitivity and open-mindedness to mediate the cultures inside and outside the classroom". By sharing teachers' thoughts on mediating actions, a deeper awareness of this practise is raised.

Mediation in practice can therefore be understood as consisting of a continuum of alternating or simultaneous linguistic, nonverbal and personal experiences strategies, as



seen clearly in this thesis in the analysis of teachers' practices when mediating new languages and cultures in the classroom. The idea of linguistic mediation as a continuum was suggested by Aden (2012) and explored in the literature review. However, the continuum presented in this study encompasses also cultural mediation and all three types of strategies. This intertwined, meaningful yet complex process that brings together the interpretation of new languages and cultures is webbed by activating the affordances found in interrelated mediation strategies. In fact, the interaction teachers made between certain mediation strategies has proved to lead to mediation, presenting FL teachers' actions as catalysts for mediation.

### **7.3. Limitations of the study**

The fundamental nature of this research, with the objective of developing and analysing mediation as an educational practice in language teaching, required observing a naturalistic environment without involving the participating teachers in identifying the processes of interest. In order to corroborate the teaching practices that were observed with teachers' thoughts and justifications, SR sessions were developed. The SR sessions respected teachers' spontaneity and did not guide them toward commenting on mediation instances or restrict about what they talked. Consequently, teachers sometimes discussed some mediation moments from their sessions, but they did not reflect on all of them. An alternative would have been to explicitly include and discuss with the teachers those excerpts that lacked support from an SR session during the final interview. Having a greater number of teachers' thoughts and justifications to bridge the gap between their beliefs and their classroom practices for each excerpt would have expanded triangulation and potentially provided more knowledge about the decisions teachers made when mediating. The participants themselves commented that they found the SR sessions beneficial for their own professional development, which could mean they would have a positive attitude towards expanding this practice.

Additionally, in discussing the findings of this study, an obvious limitation that comes to mind relates to the lack of online nonverbal mediation. The online classes that were observed for the data did not include the use of video in their teaching practice, and that prevented the study from being able to analyse aspects of nonverbal mediation in online environments. Yet, this study is representative of an ecologic teaching practice including mediation practices for this teaching mode through different strategies.

Finally, this thesis is based on a small sample of data and a small number of participants as it is qualitative research and studies each participant in depth, which is fundamental for the detection and analysis of practices. However, this may present a challenge when trying



to generalise language teachers' practices in the classroom, as it is very context-dependent, and each participant had some mediation preferences depending on their background or personality. Using a larger number of participants may present an opportunity to make broader statements in terms of generalising the use of mediation strategies among a larger and more diverse range of participants.

#### **7.4. Suggestions for future research**

Four suggestions for future research are followed in this section, including (1) exploring nonverbal mediation in online environments, (2) examining the use of mediational strategies for affective purposes instead of mediation with a focus on language and culture, and finally (3) considering awareness raising of mediation when teaching.

- (1) One research idea to continue the work of this thesis, as it relates to gathering evidence about online nonverbal mediation. While in this study, the data might suggest there are fewer opportunities to mediate online – evidenced by the absence of a whole category of strategies (the nonverbal strategies) – a different panorama might be encountered nowadays, with virtual classes being at the forefront of education following the Covid-19 pandemic. Peng, Zhang and Chen (2017) note that despite the role that nonverbal semiotic resources play in pedagogic discourse within the classroom context, studying them “remains an uncharted research avenue”. A future study of mediation in new online environments where the cameras of teachers (and students) are activated would complement the data of this study in terms of the nonverbal mediation performed by language teachers.
- (2) This study has shown how teachers mediate language and cultures through intertwining and layering the different mediation strategies. Additionally, however, it was noted that the dimension of affect was also mediated, through techniques such as laughter and empathising with students' struggles to learn a new language. Sanz Ferrer (2019) and Kohler (2020) studied the affective impact on language learners' experiences when they are mediating in the classroom; among these experiences Kohler (2020, p. 127) finds “feelings of bewilderment, embarrassment, discomfort and uncertainty”. Teachers, in turn, deal with this dimension of language learning and it could be useful to explore the creation of resources to consciously negotiate socio-affect through mediational strategies. Studying more in-depth FL teachers' use of laughter, empathising and affect in face-to-face and online environments focusing on how mediational strategies are used and combined to create a social identity for the classroom group while referring to new concepts of language and culture could also be explored in future research.



(3) Finally, bridging practice and research was one of the initial aims when I embarked on this PhD as an insider researcher. Moving from an FL teacher position into a researcher's stance for this thesis has been, as Pérez Cavana (2019, p. 84) puts it, "a fluid movement continuously changing according to the context". Reflections about changing my own teaching practice (as an FL HE teacher) after this study, and the consequences for teaching approaches, suggest that awareness about the use of mediation should be raised among FL teachers. Raising the awareness of HE FL teachers that they are mediators and how this might affect mediational practice could be a critical research question in a further study. Examining the teachers' lesson plans in the present research made it clear that the mediations that were observed were not planned, nor did teachers stop before they entered the classroom to reflect on the examples that have been analysed here. The instances identified in this study were responses to problems that were perceived by teachers in the moment. The results show that language teachers have a powerful capacity to improvise mediation as it arises. However, it would be interesting to see to what extent being conscious about the possibilities of mediation as a teacher could modify its current use.

### **7.5. Implications in foreign language teacher training**

This thesis has multiple implications for professional development and further progress in teaching languages through mediation strategies. Gibbons (2003, p. 269) notes that "teacher education courses might usefully pay more attention to developing teachers' understandings of the role of discourse in mediating learning". The results of this thesis show concrete patterns of teachers' actions when mediating new concepts or ideas. Sharing these and developing greater consciousness of the ways that foreign language teachers generate particular mediation practices in the classroom could inform practitioners' practice in a more purposeful direction. By focusing more on mediation strategies in teacher education programmes, teachers' development of mediation strategies could be expanded and supported, making them more aware of the possibilities for mediating. If they were made aware of and informed about mediation as part of their FL teacher training, teachers could develop their repertoires of mediational practices and understand the affordances of forms of mediation.

Mediation has pedagogical implications as it is a transformative experience in the classroom that allows connection points to be created and strengthened between teachers, new concepts and students. The interpretation of new languages and cultures are brought together and bridged by mediation strategies. Gohard-Radenkovic et al. (2004, p. 226) argue that further research is needed into "the mediator's role in the field of communication



in foreign languages and that of the training of trainers”. The results presented here show that the ways in which mediation happens during the process of foreign language teaching can have an impact on the construction of a mediatory pedagogy. Dendrinos (2018) argued for a new language pedagogic paradigm that includes not only translinguistic but also transcultural knowledge, making use of sociocultural knowledge and skills developed in the classroom. Looking at mediation as an umbrella for foreign language teaching and developing it explicitly to be better deployed by language teachers as a key competence is relevant for equipping future teachers’ practice, understanding and knowledge of contemporary foreign language education.

Despite the scarcity of studies on FL teachers as mediators and the insufficient integration of this into teacher training programmes, participants in this study were observed to use mediation. Given that teachers developed mediation episodes even without having been taught about this powerful tool, further investigation and application within teaching programmes about how teachers could develop mediation strategies more consciously could be of interest. The findings on different uses of strategies as mediation in this thesis, may encourage teachers to develop their own mediation repertoire to go beyond transferring information from one language into another.

It could be argued that mediation practices have been carried out by language teachers for a long time, but it is precise because of the routine nature of this bringing together of the target language and culture with those that the students already know that detailed empirical evidence analysed academically was required. Two decades ago, Zarate et al. (2004, p.226) stated that “in-depth investigation is therefore still needed in the mediator’s role in the field of communication in foreign languages and that of the training trainers”. Even though the field of mediation has evolved rapidly in the last 20 years, it is still the case that there is a lack of research on training FL teachers as mediators. Introducing the study of these strategies as part of language teacher training could inform the discussion about comprehensive ways in which teachers as mediators can actively cross borders in the FL classroom.

Mediation is a concept that is currently increasing in studies among practitioners of foreign language education. Research efforts have been placed on students as mediators, mediation as assessment or the use of single strategies in mediation. Therefore, there is evidence of a need for a better understanding of the key process of mediation in foreign language education. From an empirical perspective, this thesis represents the first attempt to explore the combinations of moves that online and face-to-face Spanish teachers in HE follow when mediating in the classroom. It is a valuable contribution to increasing the



knowledge and power of teachers as mediators in the language classroom, informing the mechanism of mediation practices to create effective learning opportunities in the field of FL teaching.



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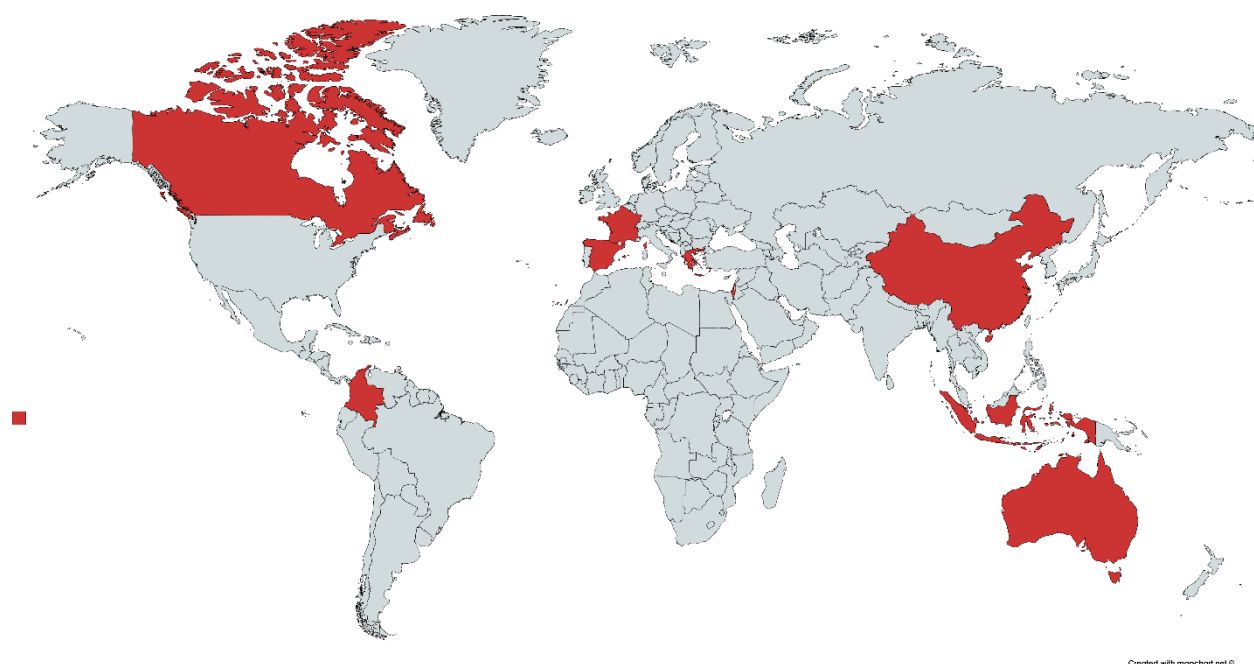




## APPENDICES



**Appendix 1. Map of where research on FL teachers' mediation has taken place between 2003 and 2022**





## Appendix 2. Appendix 2. Classroom observation sheet

### HE Spanish Teachers' Mediation Practices Classroom Observation Form

Teacher Pseudonym:			
NS/NNS:		F2F/Online:	
HE Institution Number:			
Date of the lesson:			

#### A. CLASS INFORMATION

Class year:    1        2        3        4

Number of learners enrolled in the module: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of learners attending the lesson during observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of lesson:    60        90        120    minutes



(Tick as relevant)

TYPE	MEDIUM			INTENTION		COLLABORATION			TECH	OWN EXP.		LANGUAGE	
<b>Language</b>	Oral	Written	Visual	Explicit	Implicit	High	Medium	Low	Used	Cult	Ling	Eng	Sp
Cross Linguistic													
Interlingual													
Intralingual													
Interlinguistic													
Dialogic													
<b>Culture</b>													
Intercultural													
Cultural													
Social													
<b>Affect</b>													
Mediational													
Relational													



**Note Box for comments**

Code	Comments



### Appendix 3. Stimulated recall session sheet

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## SPANISH TEACHERS' MEDIATION PRACTICES

### Stimulated Recall Sessions

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Teacher Pseudonym:			
NS/NNS:		F2F/Online:	
HE Institution Number:			
Date of the lesson observed:			
Date of the Stimulated Recall Session			

#### Introduction

- Thank you very much for your time to recall and reflect about your lesson. Please, sit comfortably and be ready to watch your classroom recorded within the next hour. Do let me know if you need a break, please.
- Your teaching practice, linguistic and cultural explanations and every attempt to bring the Spanish language and culture closer to the student is the focus of my attention. Any further comments on the students' responses or your expectations on this classroom are also much appreciated.
- We are both allowed to pause the video and comment at any time. We can also move forward or back at any time if we remember something worth commenting on. This session is going to be audio-recorded and I will only take some notes to facilitate the data collection and data analysis afterwards.
- This is a valuable activity of self-reflection which is about being curious about your own practice, adopting a mindset of critical professional development while paying attention to details. Watching yourself in the video will develop a sense of self-awareness which can have significant benefits for your future work.

#### 1. Questions during the session

- What did you have in mind when explaining this concept?



- Did you change some part of your teaching plan because of the students' comments?
- What were you thinking with this examples/explanation/activity/interaction?
- Would you like to comment on this explanation/activity/interaction?



The questions asked during the SR sessions will require a self-reflexive inquiry. The teachers will be given time for their comments and I will not urge them to answer any questions as self-reflection requires time and place. I will be taking notes for nonverbal actions and attitudes perceived from the teacher, which will not be audio-recorded.

Minute	Comments	Teacher	I



## Appendix 4. Semi-structured interview questions

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### HE SPANISH TEACHERS' PRACTICES

#### Semi-Structured Interview

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<b>Teacher Pseudonym:</b>	
<b>F2F/Online:</b>	
<b>HE Institution Number:</b>	
<b>Date of the interview:</b>	

#### Introduction

Thank you for accepting to be interviewed. I would like to ask you a few questions about your approaches to teaching Spanish. You can choose not to answer questions and stop at any time. This interview will take approximately 75 minutes.

- 1. What kinds of roles do you believe you need to play as a foreign language teacher?**
- 2. To what extent is the teacher him/herself a language and culture resource in the classroom? How do you see that resource being used?**
- 3. How do you create a positive classroom environment to facilitate learning with your teaching?**

*Prompt: Manage interactions, resolve difficult situations*

- 4. How culturally and linguistically diverse is your classroom? How do you know?**

*Prompt: Is it useful to have a linguistic and culturally diverse classroom? Why?*

- 5. What are the advantages and challenges of a linguistic and culturally diverse classroom?**
- 6. Do you agree with the idea that one of the roles of language teachers is to create bridges between languages and cultures? Why?**
- 7. What approaches, strategies or activities do you use to help students make links between their own languages and varieties of Spanish? \***

*Prompt: examples from the languages you know*



- 8. What approaches, strategies or activities do you use to help students make links between their own cultures and Spanish-speaking cultures?**

*Prompt: examples from own experience*

- 9. How does technology constrain or help you bridging concepts in your teaching practice?**
- 10. To what extent do you think language teachers' empathy is an important part of language teaching?**
- 11. To what extent do you think language teachers should include identity in their classes?**
- 12. When planning for a lesson, to what degree do you prepare in advance for possible difficulties students might have? Can you think of some examples when you have done so?**

*Prompt: language and culture difficulties*

- 13. To what extent are you able to follow your plan during the lesson? What do you improvise?**

*Prompt: homework and assessment*

- 14. People say that teachers are mediators between languages and cultures, how do you understand this mediation?**
- 15. And a final question. To what degree have you ever considered yourself a mediator in your language lessons? Do you remember what made you aware of this role (e.g. a book, a colleague, a pedagogical approach, etc)?**

## **CLOSURE**

This is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time.



## **Background Questionnaire**

### **Introduction**

Thank you very much for filling out this survey about yourself which will help me get to know you better and will make our final interview go smoother. There are four sections: background, languages, education, and teaching. You have the last question where you can add any other relevant information you would like to share. Please feel free not to answer any of the questions if you do not want to. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes. ¡Gracias!

### **1. Background**

1.1. Country of origin

1.2. Places you lived in more than 6 months

### **2. Languages**

2.1. What are your first languages?

2.2. Fill in the table below with a list of languages you know, at which level and how you learnt each of them.

### **3. Education**

3.1. What are your previous studies?

Language	Level (beginner, intermediate, advanced)	Context of learning



BA degree:

Postgraduate studies:

Other professional training (e.g. CAP, DELE, PCERT in HE...):

#### **4. Teaching**

4.1. Why are you teaching Spanish? Please explain further:

- ☐ Personal reasons
- ☐ Professional reasons
- ☐ Other:

4.2. How long have you been teaching Spanish in total?

- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years

4.3. How long have you been teaching Spanish in British Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)?

- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years

#### **5. Any other information about your professional or academic profile?**



**Appendix 6. Consent form for teacher participants**

**Project title:** HE Spanish teachers' practices

**Participant Reference Code:** \_\_\_\_\_(For office use – to be added)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print  
name) agree to take part in this study.

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.
2. I understand that my participation will involve **video observations, stimulated recall sessions and a semi-structured interview** and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
3. I acknowledge that:
  - a. the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymised at the point of transcription on **March 15th 2019**. Even if I decide to take part in the video recording and stimulated recall sessions, I can still decide not to take part in the semi-structured interview, or any of the previous methods. After this point, data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided
  - c. the project is for the purpose of research



- d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements
- e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored **electronically in a password protected folder and in an encrypted USB back-up** and will be destroyed after **September 2023**
- f. I have been informed that **anonymised** research data may be made available to other members of the research community **mainly the supervisors of the principal investigator** until **September 2023**
- g. Any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any disseminations or publications arising from the research
- h. I have been given contact details for a person whom I can contact if I have any concerns about the way in which this research project is being conducted
- i. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

Finally:

- I consent to the **classroom observations** being video-recorded
- I consent to the **stimulated recall sessions** being audio-recorded
- I consent to the **semi-structured interview** being audio-recorded
- I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



For any questions or queries please email Isabel Cobo Palacios at [isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

If you want to talk to someone else about this project, please contact: Dr Inma Álvarez or Dr Zsuzsanna Barkanyi at the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS), The Open University, [Inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk](mailto:Inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk) or [zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk](mailto:zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk)

This research has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number: (<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>)



## Appendix 7. Consent form for students

**Project title:** HE Spanish teachers' practices

**Student Participant Reference Code:** \_\_\_\_\_ (For office use –  
to \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_ added)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print  
name) agree to take part in this study.

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.
2. I understand that my participation will **only involve being part of a classroom which will be videoed observed** and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
3. I acknowledge that:
  - j. the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction
  - k. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymised at the point of transcription on **March 15th 2019**. After this point, data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided
  - l. the project is for the purpose of research
  - m. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements
  - n. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored **electronically in a password**



**protected folder and in an encrypted USB back-up and will be destroyed after September 2023**

- o. I have been informed that **anonymised** research data may be made available to other members of the research community **mainly the supervisors of the principal investigator** until **September 2023**
- p. Any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any disseminations or publications arising from the research
- q. I have been given contact details for a person whom I can contact if I have any concerns about the way in which this research project is being conducted
- r. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

Finally:

- o I consent to the **classroom observation** being video-recorded

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For any questions or queries please email Isabel Cobo Palacios at [isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

If you want to talk to someone else about this project, please contact: Dr Inma Álvarez or Dr Zsuzsanna Barkanyi at the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS), The Open University, [Inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk](mailto:Inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk) or [zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk](mailto:zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk)

This research has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number: [\(http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/\)](http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/)



## Appendix 8. Information leaflet for teacher-participants



**Isabel Cobo Palacios** Faculty of Wellbeing, Education  
and Language Studies

The Open University, Third Floor, Stuart Hall Building,  
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

[Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

07815533082

### Participant Information Teacher:

<b>HE Spanish teachers' practices</b>
---------------------------------------

### What is the aim of this research?

Thank you for your interest in participating in this HE *Spanish teachers' mediation practices study*.

*This research study* is part of the larger project *Language Acts and Worldmaking*, led by King's College London and funded by the AHRC as part of the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI). The initiative has the goal to strengthen the UK's research capability in Modern Languages by reconnecting research and practice, and by changing perceptions of the value of studying Modern Languages.

The purpose of this study is to understand some of the classroom teaching practices of Spanish language teachers in Higher Education. This study will not focus on the topical content or the grades the students achieved but on the ways teachers communicate with learners and their teaching strategies.

### Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

Isabel Cobo Palacios is carrying out this research on behalf of OU. Isabel Cobo Palacios has received training in carrying out research on Education and Languages in particular. This study is part of her PhD and the PhD supervisors are Dr Inma Álvarez (inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk) and Dr Zsuzsanna Barkanyi (zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk)



### **Why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You have been identified as a potential HE Spanish teacher to participate in this study. For this reason I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

### **If I take part in this research, what will be involved?**

The principal researcher (Isabel) will be conducting qualitative research, including video observations in the classroom, semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall sessions during January 2019 until March 2019. The classroom observations will take approximately two hours per session, the semi-structured interview and the stimulated recall sessions will take one hour and would be conducted at your workplace, at a date and time that is convenient to you. A pilot video observation will be scheduled to test the resources involved in the recording (video camera and recorder). If you choose, the findings of the research will be shared with you.

### **What will the classroom video observation, SRP and interviews be like?**

Engagement on this research means being part of qualitative research that includes observing your classes, interviewing you and having a reflection session to recall what happened during the classroom observed. The Principal Investigator (Isabel) will be taking notes and videoing the classrooms you agree on being observed. The videos of the classrooms will only serve as a tool for the stimulated recall sessions.

### **What will we you be talking about in the interview and SRP sessions? What will Isabel be observing?**

Isabel will be observing your teaching practice, any strategies and tools used to bring the Spanish language and culture closer to your students. In the interview you will be asked about your reflections on your teaching practice. Finally, the stimulated recall sessions will be a conversation over the observed lessons watching the video and commenting on any aspect you or the researcher find interesting and worth commenting.

### **Is it confidential?**

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. We will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research. All data, which includes recordings of the stimulated recall sessions and the interviews, will be transcribed and anonymised immediately after being



collected and completely destroyed at the end of the project in 2023. Information will not get back to your managers and this will not impact on your employment.

Please complete and sign the attached *Consent Form* if you agree for your data to be used in this way in the project and return it to Isabel Cobo on [Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

### **What happens now?**

Over the next few weeks, Isabel may contact you by telephone to ask if you would like to take part and, if so, ask you a few questions about yourself. We need to make sure that a cross-section of people with different experiences are included in the study and for this reason we cannot guarantee that we will see everyone who volunteers to take part, although we would hope to include most. If you would prefer not to be contacted about this research, please use the Freephone number below to let us know and we will not contact you again. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may wish to inform the Faculty Dean of Teaching (or your Line Manager) of your intention to participate in this project.

### **What if I have other questions?**

If you have any other questions about the study we would be very happy to answer them. Please contact Isabel Cobo Palacios on 07815533082 or by email to [Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)



## Appendix 9. Information leaflet for students



**Isabel Cobo Palacios**

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

The Open University, Third Floor, Stuart Hall Building,  
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

[Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

07815533082

### Participant Information for Students:

#### HE Spanish teachers' practices

#### What is the aim of this research?

Thank you for your interest in participating in this HE *Spanish teachers' mediation practices study*.

*This research study* is part of the larger project *Language Acts and Worldmaking*, led by King's College London and funded by the AHRC as part of the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI). The initiative has the goal to strengthen the UK's research capability in Modern Languages by reconnecting research and practice, and by changing perceptions of the value of studying Modern Languages.

The purpose of this study is to understand the intercultural mediation occurring in Spanish classrooms in UK Universities. This study will research the use of past experiences, classroom practices, attitudes and behaviours of Spanish teachers and their students in the classroom. The study will focus particularly on how Spanish teachers see themselves in this role of intercultural mediators, how they co-construct this mediation with the students and what particular strategies are used for this purpose.

#### Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

Isabel Cobo Palacios is carrying out this research on behalf of OU. Isabel Cobo Palacios has received training in carrying out research on Education and Languages in particular. This study is part of her PhD and the PhD supervisors are Dr Inma Álvarez



(inma.alvarez@open.ac.uk) and Dr Zsuzsanna Barkanyi  
(zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk)

### **Why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

Your Spanish teacher has been identified as a potential HE Spanish teacher to participate in this study. For this reason I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

### **If I take part in this research, what will be involved?**

The principal researcher (Isabel) will be conducting qualitative research, including video observations in your Spanish classroom during January 2019 until March 2019. The classroom video observations will take approximately two hours per session. The focus of this observations is your teacher but you will be part of the classroom and for this reason I need to have your consent too.

### **What will the classroom video observation be like?**

Engagement on this research means being part of qualitative research that includes observing your Spanish classes. The principal researcher (Isabel) will be taking notes in the classroom while a camera will video the whole lesson.

### **What will Isabel be observing?**

Isabel will be observing your teachers' practice, any strategies and tools used to bring the Spanish language and culture closer to you.

### **Is it confidential?**

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. We will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research. All data will be transcribed and anonymised immediately after being collected and completely destroyed at the end of the project in 2023.

Please complete and sign the attached *Consent Form* if you agree for your data to be used in this way in the project and return it to Isabel Cobo on [Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)

### **What happens now?**

Over the next few weeks, Isabel will arrange the best time and date with your teacher to carry out the observations. If you would prefer not to be involved about this research, please



use the Freephone number below to let us know and we will not contact you again. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

**What if I have other questions?**

If you have any other questions about the study we would be very happy to answer them. Please contact Isabel Cobo Palacios on 07815533082 or by email to [Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.cobo-palacios@open.ac.uk)



## Appendix 10. Data collected

Participant	Class 1	SR 1	Class 2	SR 2	Class 3	SR3	Class 4	SR 4	Inter view	Total
C	29/01/2019  1h 25min	30/01/2019  34min	26/03/2019  1h 32min	27/03/2019  36min	23/04/2019  1h 28 min	24/04/2019  46 mins	07/05/2019  1h 26 mins	13/05/2019  43 mins	18/07/19  1 h	<b>Video</b> 5h 51min <b>SR</b> 2h 39min <b>Total:</b> 9h 30min
D	22/01/2019  1h 33min	06/02/2019  45min	15/01/2019  1h 34min	20/02/2019  56 min	26/03/2019  1h 28	27/03/2019  43min	30/04/2019  1h 26min	01/05/2019  53 min	18/07/19  1 h	<b>Video</b> 6h 1 min <b>SR</b> 3h 28min <b>Total:</b> 10h 29min
E	18/02/2019  1h 36min	19/03/2019  45 mins	22/03/2019  1h 48min	25/03/2019  33min	08/03/2019  1h 42min	11/03/2019  50min	11/03/2019  2h 33min	15/03/2019  57min	16/07/19  1 h	<b>Video</b> 8 h 5 min <b>SR:</b> 3h 08min <b>Total:</b> 12h 13min
F	28/01/2019  1h 42min	30/01/2019  34min	08/02/2019  1h 40 min	12/02/2019  39min	01/03/2019  1h 39min	04/03/2019  44min	08/03/2019  1h 40min	15/03/2019  40min	23/07/19  1 h	<b>Video</b> 7 h <b>SR</b> 3h <b>Total: 11h</b>



## Appendix 11. Summary of excerpts analysed

Excerpt number	Excerpt title	Strategy	Teaching mode	Page number
1	Madera de actriz	Paraphrasing	Face-to-face	61
2	Carterista	Paraphrasing	Online	62
3	Tergiversar	Paraphrasing	Online	64
4	Con tal que	Paraphrasing	Online	66
5	Porro	Explaining	Face-to-face	72
6	Botellón	Explaining	Face-to-face	73
7	Recados	Exemplifying	Online	77
8	Manías	Exemplifying	Face-to-face	79
9	Molestia	Exemplifying	Face-to-face	82
10	Avería	Exemplifying	Face-to-face	85
11	Equivocarse	Translating	Online	88
12	Ingenua	Translating	Face-to-face	90
13	Dejar de	Translating	Face-to-face	92
14	Ponerse	Miming	Face-to-face	100
15	Pisar	Miming	Face-to-face	102
16	Mojar	Miming	Face-to-face	105
17	Engordar/adelgazar	Miming	Face-to-face	113
18	Agujero	Miming	Face-to-face	116
19	Cartera	Showing	Face-to-face	121
20	Cabello	Showing	Face-to-face	123
21	Césped	Pointing	Face-to-face	126
22	Correct prepositions	Teachers as L2 students	Online	142
23	Creating a list for linking words	Teachers as L2 students	Online	145
24	Moving between languages' politeness	Teachers as L2 students	Face-to-face	148
25	Friqui	Teachers outside the language education context	Face-to-face	154



26	Intralingual diversity	Teachers as L2 users	Face-to-face	158
27	Spanglish	Teachers as L2 users	Online	162



## Appendix 12. Translations of transcripts into English

### Translations in English from all excerpts used<sup>2</sup>

#### Excerpt 1: *Madera de actriz* (makings of an actress)

- 01 **Elena:** She doesn't know what to wear. Ok. 3. Louise, Mariángelos is studying  
02 performing arts because she wants to change her job.  
03 **S1:** It's not that she wants to change her job but that....  
04 **Elena:** It's not that she wants (doing a loud and long A sound with her mouth) but  
05 because she has (with a louder voice) the makings of an actress. Ok?  
06 **S2:** I don't understand '*madera*' is wood?  
07 **Elena:** Yes, but '*tener madera de actriz*' is an expression that means having a lot of  
08 talent. Ok?  
09 **S2:** Hmmm (prolonged intonation showing sudden understanding)  
10 **S3:** Ahh (and she starts writing something down in her notebook)  
11 **SS:** (the rest of the class start making some notes too)

#### Excerpt 2: *Carterista* (pickpocket)

- 01 **S1:** What are '*carteristas*'?  
02 **Elena:** '*Carteristas*' are people who steal wallets. Do you remember what a  
03 '*cartera*' is? Your '*cartera*' is where you put your money. [...]  
04 **S2:** [...] What is a '*carterista*'?  
05 **Elena:** '*Carterista*' is a person who steals wallets.  
06 **S3:** '*Carterista*' is a person who steals ...

#### SR session

**Elena:** ...Well... I remembered, but something that doesn't have anything to do with the class. I remembered when I was teaching Spanish in Barcelona and 'pickpocket' was one of the first things that I taught my students... In the metro you have to be very careful because there are pickpockets.... at that time we used different examples. I thought back to that.

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<sup>2</sup> All line numbers respect the original version, that is why the number does not always align with the start of the line in this translated version.



### Excerpt 3: *Tergiversar* (to misrepresent)

01 **S1**: But the project has the approval of the authorities. "They are

02 '*tergi, terguiversaaando*' the data on the Partial Plan..." (She read the full text on  
03 the slide)

04 **Carmen**: Well, '*tergiversar*' is to change. They are changing the data, confusing the  
05 data that I am giving, very good. Then here we have the quote from Gil. '*Se están*  
06 '*tergiversando*' the data ... etc. Very good, then how could we say what the mayor  
07 said in another way? How could we change this  
08 text a little, but to make it clear what he said?

09 **S1**: (She raises her hand in the participants window)

10 **Carmen**: Yes, Pamela, go ahead

11 **S1**: I'm not sure, but I think he is saying that

12 the... the.. authorities are ahm.. let's see.... no, they are changing

13 the ... no, no I don't think so, I'm sorry. No, I'm sorry I don't know. Sorry

14 **Carmen**: It's Ok. You can say something like you have here, they are  
15 changing the information, they are altering the information to  
16 discredit this urban urban development. Why? And he explains why it is a  
17 positive thing, and not a negative thing like people are saying it is. Why? Because the  
18 mayor in some way is promoting the construction of this  
19 tourist centre.

### Excerpt 4: *Con tal que* (provided that)

01 **S1**: In 5 can we also say 'if Carlos invited me to the cinema I will go with him'?

02 Or, can we also use 'invited'? If Carlos invited me I'll go with him?

03 **Diana**: If, I, you're saying this, Bob, you're telling me. 'I will go to the  
04 cinema with Carlos iiiif he invited me'

05 **S1**: What does it mean?

06 **Diana**: But '*con tal que*' ... he invites me. Yes?

07 **S1**: aha

08 **Diana**: it's a completely different expression. I will only go, if he invites me I will go.

09 '*con tal que*' he invites me means that he has to invite me, if not I won't go. If he invited me  
10 maybe there is the possibility that he will invite me. If he invited me, if there was the  
possibility



11 that he invited me, but you yourself gave me the answer when you said if,  
12 you need another phrase there, if he invited me. I will go the cinema with Carlos if he invited  
me

13 **S1**: And what does it mean? Sorry I'm being a bit stupid, what does '*con tal*

14 *que*' mean? I don't really understand the expression '*con tal que*'

15 **Diana**: He has to invite me for me to go, ok now? '*con tal que*' is the same as saying

16 I'll go to the cinema with Carlos, but he has to invite me. That's it, '*con tal que*', I don't know  
how

17 a site like linguee, I don't know how that expression would be translated on a site like  
linguee '*con tal que*' is a bit of a colloquial

18 expression, let's see linguee, I am

19 looking it up ah? But it's much more, ummm in linguee it is translated as

20 'for the sake of' so you can note down it's like, but here it cannot be translated as

21 'for the sake of' but you can note that it is a much stronger expression than

22 'if', 'if' is a condition. '*Con tal que*' is much more an assertion, ok? It means the only

23 way that I am going to go to the cinema is if Carlos invites me eh? It's true, it is

24 quite a difficult expression to translate into English, but the difference between '*con tal que*'  
and

25 'if' is that 'if' is a possibility and '*con tal que*' is much more an assertion.

26 **S2**: 'Provided that' (written in the message chat).

27 **Diana**: Look Peter, 'provided that', that's it! It's not 'if', it's 'provided that', exactly

28 Thank you Kelly. Do you understand now, Bob?

29 **S1**: Yes

30 **Diana**: So, if you use 'if' it is a possibility, if you use '*con tal que*' it is provided

31 that, it's that. Thank you very much, Kelly. I couldn't think what it was.

32 **S1**: Thank you, Diana, and thank you, Kelly

### **Excerpt 5: Porro (joint)**

01 **Fernando**: Are there any difficult words apart from .... We have seen these two, we have

02 '*encerrarse*' when you lock yourself behind doors and '*descender*' to go down

03 **S1**: ¿*El porro*?

04 **Fernando**: '*Porro*' is a type of drug in Spain, I think the equivalent would be 'joint',

05 ok?

06 **S1**: ohh (she nods and write something down in her notebook)



07 **Fernando** I think it is a type of drug, yes? It is a colloquial expression. I don't think that's its

08 scientific name ha,ha (he laughed) And one final question, is there any of this

09 information that would be very different in England?...

#### **Excerpt 6: *Botellón* (drinking in the street)**

01 **Fernando**: What do you think about D? (question d)

02 **S1**: I think young people think more and more that to have a good time they need

03 alcohol at their parties, but I also think that there are young people who don't like it or

04 like alcohol

05 **Fernando**: Ok, so it depends on the person? Do you know the expression

06 '*botellón*'?

07 **S1**: Yes

08 **Fernando**: You don't?

09 **SS**: No

10 **Fernando**: Can you explain to Part 2 (he divided the class in two groups: Part 1

11 and Part 2) what is a '*botellón*'? (and he writes '*botellón*' on the board)

12 **S1**: A '*botellón*' is like a party in Spain where young people go out onto the street

13 to ... It's like binge drinking

14 **Fernando**: Yes, so what people do is drink in public, is that right? Particularly

15 young people.

16 **S1**: But ancient people don't like it at all

17 **Fernando**: Ancient people?

18 **S1**: The ... Sorry, older people

19 **Fernando**: ah, yes, I think that after a certain age, when you have family and children you don't

20 like it much, but you'll see that in Spain drinking in public is not so bad

21 considering how in other countries and particularly in universities sometimes people

22 get together in the street to drink.

23 **S2**: Hmmm

24 **Fernando** They buy some bottles and start drinking in the street, in

25 public places.



26 **S3**: (nodding)

27 **Fernando**: increasingly it's being banned, when I was young there were more because  
28 it wasn't regulated, but I think now there are many cities where they can  
29 fine you. Fine is ...? '*Multa*' (and he writes '*multa*' on the board).

### SR session

**Fernando**: I know that S1 has done Spanish A level and I know '*botellón*' always appears in the books. And they (the girls), because they started doing Spanish at University, had no idea about it. And also because I know S1 really likes explaining, so I thought it was a good idea. And yes, it is also typical, what we talked about last week about being aware of cultural differences.

### Excerpt 7: Recados (errands)

01 **Diana**: What you have to do, as I have said, is expose yourself to the imperfect as much  
02 as you can, do lots of exercises that are on the internet and the more familiar it becomes  
03 the easier it is for you. Let's see, another example, "*Los recados*". "Rosario, 80, has a cold  
today

04 and asks her granddaughter Lucia, 18 to do some '*recados*':" The '*recados*' are that  
05 she is going to go to the shop to buy bread, milk for her, ok? "When Lucia comes back  
06 it seems that she hasn't done the '*recados*' exactly as her grandma asked her to. Practice  
07 the imperfect subjunctive, following the model." [...]

08 **Diana**: [...] Let's see Lucia, ¿have you done all the '*recados*' correctly?

09 **S1**: Well granny, I've bought full fat milk

10 **Diana**: But I asked you to buy skimmed milk!

11 **S1**: Sorry, there wasn't any

12 **Diana**: Yes, you can choose, very good, very good, Charlotte, you can choose from among  
them but if ...

### Excerpt 8: Manías (odd habits)

01 **Elena**: One of them is to read a text which is in the dossier and write about some  
02 odd habits in a Google doc, ok? Does anyone know what a '*manía*' is?  
03 Some of you haven't read the text yet, have you?

04 **S1**: (He shakes his head)

05 **S2**: Is it a manual?

06 **S3**: Manual? (S3 was looking surprised)

07 **Elena**: No, no.



08 **SS:** hahaha (They laugh)

09 **Elena:** A '*manía*', come on, those of you who have read the text. What is a

10 '*manía*'?

11 **S4:** A habit

12 **Elena:** It's like a habit, isn't it?

13 **SS:** Yes

14 **Elena:** But it's a negative habit, isn't it? These habits that you have, bad habits ...Maybe

15 negative habits ... Are not always negative, but normally they have a

16 negative connotation. For example, what '*manías*' do people have? Well some people

17 have the '*manía*' that when they leave their house they have to [look at the mobile phone,  
oh! In my

18 bag, are my keys, my phone, etcetera ((she is moving her hands pretending

19 she is wearing a shoulder bag and she is looking for objects inside it))]

20 **S5:** Ok

21 **S6:** Hmmm

22 **S7:** (He nods)

23 **SS:** (Looking at her paying attention)

24 **Elena:** That is an '*manía*' that you always do something or ... Everyone has

25 different '*manías*' ... Let's see if I can think of some ... I think I have seen a person who  
says

26 that [every time they go up stairs ((making a gesture with her right hand as if

27 going up some steps))] they have to count in their head ((gesture with her right hand

28 near her right temple pointing with her finger to her head and moving her hand in

29 circles))] [1, 2, 3, 4, etc. (she moves her legs and feet to make steps at every

30 number she says))]

31 **S8:** What? Hahaha

32 **S2:** That's ... (inaudible word which may be 'mad')

33 **S1:** Hahaha (they laugh)

34 **S9:** So, is it a habit or a quirk?

35 **S2:** Hmmm



36 **Elena:** I think it's a bit of both, yes, and it's sort of negative. Then one of the  
37 things you have to do is to read the text, ok? And write in the Google  
38 doc the '*manías*' that you have, ok?

### SR session

**R:** Ok, later on at minute 9 we've got an explanation of the exercise on '*manías*'. And, did you have any particular thoughts while you were explaining '*manías*'? We can see here that you have given several examples ...

**Elena:** Well I was thinking that I have never found a good translation into English and then I was trying to give examples which as there isn't a translation and as I have never found a translation that I think is suitable, I was trying to give examples that covered what I think of as the meaning of '*manía*'.

**R:** Ok

**Elena:** In fact, the one about the stairs is mine

**R:** Ah really?

**Elena:** I think I remember that someone said, didn't they, that that was mad hahaha, but I couldn't think of any and I thought of my own.

### Excerpt 9: Molestia (bother)

01 **Fernando:** And part of the translations or a big problem of the translations (he sits at  
02 one of the tables) is that often they are literal translation and false friends. There are  
03 false friends in many languages, aren't there? I suppose French and English or German and  
04 English have false friends, but what about Spanish false friends? Do you know  
any?

05 Any false friends?

06 **S1:** (She raises her hand)

07 **Fernando:** Becky, which one do you know?

08 **S1:** '*Ropa*', I always think it means rope.

09 **Fernando:** Indeed, and '*ropa*' is clothes, isn't it? Generally '*ropa*' is going to be singular in  
10 Spanish, we say '*la ropa*' and not '*las ropas*'.

11 **S2:** Ehmm '*deporte*'



12 **Fernando:** '*Deporte*', what would be its false friend?

13 **S2:** It's the same as 'deport'

14 **Fernando:** Yes, yes I agree. And its means 'sport', doesn't it? And Liam, have you got an example? (Liam

15 was looking at him and he noticed his attention)

16 **S3:** '*Molestia*' is that right? '*Molestia*'

17 **Fernando:** '*Molestia*', very good. In Spanish '*molestia*' is not as serious as it is in English.

18 'Una *molestia*' is for example [when your foot hurts a bit ((he touches his right leg,

19 grabbing his right shin while miming a painful face)) right?] Any more false friends?

20 ¿No? To tell the truth there are lots ...

### Excerpt 10: *Avería* (fault)

01 **Elena:** (Talking to a student who had a question) 'Una *avería*' is when something doesn't  
02 work) hmmm for example, if you go to the bathroom [and water is leaking from the tap ((she  
makes a gesture

03 with her left hand miming turning on a tap and her right hand moves upwards as if water

04 was coming out of a tap unexpectedly)), that is an '*avería*'], ¿ok?

Four minutes later:

05 **Elena:** So this '*avería*' cannot be repaired. An '*avería*' is when something doesn't work,  
06 ok? It's a ... fault. Very good, number 9

### Excerpt 11: *Equivocarse* (to make a mistake)

01 **S1:** Ah, sorry it's just that I have ... uh... I can't say that word ... '*equivocado*'?

02 **Diana:** Good, what does '*equivocado*' mean? 'Me he *equivocado*'?

03 **S1:** '*Equivocado*'?

04 **Diana:** Sorry?

05 **S1:** Hahaha. It's a difficult word.

06 **Diana:** It's a difficult word that means ... (S1 is not answering) ... 'I got it wrong',

07 ok?

08 **S1:** Ah ok, yes



09 **Diana:** '*Equivocarse*' is to do it wrong, to do it wrong, ok? Very good, very good,  
10 eh ... It is difficult it's true, it's long, ok?

11 **S1:** Yes, hahaha

### **Excerpt 12: Ingenua (naive)**

01 **Elena:** What does this sentence mean? 'Yes, I knew it, these

02 things always happen to me because I am naive.' What does this mean?

03 **S1:** These things always happen to me ... in general?

04 **Elena:** Mmm ... no, careful. '*Ingenua*' is a person who is innocent, naive. Ok?

05 **SS:** (They make some notes in their books)

### **Interview**

**Elena:** Making the student see that his mistake was translating it from English, what he did was take it from English and translate it into Spanish, but there isn't an equivalent word/phrase, that's what it is. Right? And then you explain to him why, because in Spanish it's such and such, but first you make him see what his mistake is. The mistake is that he's brought (translated?) it from English, it is important to me that he realises this consciously because they do it unconsciously.

**Elena:** I always tr..try to make them explain the word before offering the English translation, I always try to explain the word before giving the translation in English. But sometimes it is impossible because they jump quickly to the translation. I thought it is simpler if I give them the translation.

**Elena:** I think I did a one second analysis about how explaining what it means in Spanish would take 20 minutes. So it is better to give them the translation and then I thought that they would probably confuse it with other words that sounded phonetically similar in English such as 'warm' or something, and then I thought I am going to say to them 'w-a-r-n-' [spelling it out]

**Elena:** I thought that it would take a while to explain '*arreglar*' (fix) in Spanish because they also did not know the concept of '*avería*' (breakdown) so then I thought that I could have perhaps given them an example of their car breaking down and them being stranded on the road but I thought it is simpler if I say the translation.



**Elena:** Yes, I think someone had confirmed it but it is at least a confirmation from an external source and then some words are easy to explain in English, others in Spanish, you have no other option than giving them the translation in English but well here at least it was easy, especially in the context of one person already knowing it.

### Excerpt 13: Dejar de (to stop doing)

01 **Fernando:** We have '*dejar de*' with infinitive. '*Dejar de*' is to stop something or give up  
02 something, ok? It is not like having a pause, having a break, it's more  
03 like to stop something for good. For example, give up smoking is '*dejar de fumar*',  
04 ok?  
05 **S1:** (She asks a question referring to his explanation)  
06 **Fernando:** '*Dejar de*' means to give up or to stop. Imagine that I am very good  
07 at playing football, which is false, but I start university and I say that I don't have time  
08 to play football, therefore, '*dejo de*' play football or '*he dejado de*' play football  
09 at university. It's like I stop, I give up. This '*dejar de*' doesn't mean to have a short  
10 break, like having a break in your life, it's more like stop something for good or  
11 give up, ok? Yes? All ok?

### Excerpt 14: Ponerse (to put on)

01 **S1 and S2:** (They were discussing what '*ponerse*' might mean)  
02 **Elena:** (She approached them) Ah '*ponerse*'? [it means '*ponerse*  
03 *ropa*' ((Elena interrupts students by standing next to them and intervening with this  
04 comment. While saying '*ropa*' she lifts both hands to her chest and moves her arms and  
05 shoulders miming the action of putting a piece of clothing on))]  
06 **S1:** Ahh ... to know what to wear?  
07 **Elena:** Yes, exactly

### Excerpt 15: Pisar (to walk on)

01 **Elena:** Ok, and number 10?  
02 **S1:** Please '*no pise el césped*'  
03 **Elena:** [Please '*no pise el césped*' (while writing it on the board)]



04 **S2**: What is '*pisar*'?

05 **Elena**: '*Pisar*' is [this ((and she proceeds to stamp her left foot on the floor))),

06 ok?

07 **SS**: Ohh

08 **Elena**: Then [DO NOT ((stamping her right foot with more

09 emphasis than with her other foot she had just previously demonstrated, while

10 looking at students)) '*pises*' on the grass].

11 **SS**: (After students looked at her gesture, most of them write something down in

12 their notebooks)

### Excerpt 16: *Mojar* (to wet)

01 **Elena**: *Mojar* (and she wrote '*mojar(se)*' on the whiteboard). '*Mojar*' or '*mojarse*'.

02 '*Mojar*' is when ... you remember ... '*mojar*' is when [you ((she points at herself with

03 both hands inward while saying 'you'))

04 put water on ((she bends her left-hand fingertips inward separating her thumb,

05 presumably holding something, and moves her hand slowly from left to right with

06 her elbow out as if pouring some liquid))] something or somebody

07 and '*mojarse*' is when [you ((she points at herself with both hands displaying her fingers

08 inward and looking at students))]

09 **S2**: Get wet!

10 **Elena**: Exactly, when you get wet

11 **S3**: '*Mojar en, en*'?

12 **Elena**: *Mojar* ... ehmm (she puts her hand in her head as thinking), no, no

13 preposition. '*Mojar*' the ... table? (she directs her gaze toward a table between the

14 student and herself)

15 **S4**: That's just to get wet

16 **Elena**: Exactly, do you say wetting? No ...

17 **S4**: To wet something?

18 **Elena**: Yeah, like putting water in something ...

19 **S4**: Ah, yeah, like to a plant

20 **Elena**: No ... that is water a plant ... that's a different word (she starts writing '*REGAR*'

21 on the board)



22 **S5:** '*Mojar*' the bed?

23 **Elena:** '*Mojar*' the bed is correct (pointing at the student), when you are a baby,

24 babies '*mojan*' the bed, ok?

25 **SS:** Haha

26 **Elena:** Ok? '*Regar*' is for plants (tapping the whiteboard with the marker to

27 highlight the written word), what you were asking, '*regar*'. So, for

28 example (she starts speaking a bit louder now) if it is raining hard and [I haven't got

29 an umbrella ((she holds her left hand and lifts it halfway in a vertical fist shape as if

30 grabbing an umbrella's handle))), I '*mojarse*', ok? [*Yo me mojo* ((she

31 said this sentence louder while resting her open left hand on her chest and making

32 circles around the word '*mojar(se)*' on the board with the pen in her right hand))]

33 **S5:** *Yo me mojo*

34 **Elena:** But if I am in the class or in the street with [a bottle of water ((she lifts

35 both hands at the same time, holding her right hand higher, with fingertips bent

36 towards her palms in a diagonal position with some distance in between hands as

37 if grabbing a bottle of water))] and [I do 'psss' ((she moves both hand to her right

38 side moving them in a swing movement forward to the left as if throwing the content

39 on a recipient)) to Laurel, I '*mojo*' Laurel ((she points at Laurel with her index finger

40 in her left hand while saying 'Laurel'))]

41 **SS:** Hahaha

42 **Elena:** Hahaha

43 **S5:** Mojado

44 **S3:** It would be a lot of fun

45 **Elena:** Haha a water fight

46 **S6:** Are '*mojar*' and '*regar*' the same?

47 **Elena:** No, they are different. '*Regar*' is only for plants, ok?

48 **S3:** To water

### Excerpt 17: Engordar/adelgazar (to get fatter/slimmer)

01 **S1:** Elena, is 'to become' '*quedarse*'?

02 **Elena:** Hmm ... No, there are various verbs in Spanish ... To become? (after saying

03 'become' she moves her left open hand from left to right horizontally making two



04 stops in the air while closing her fist at the end as if indicating missing parts of  
05 the sentence)

06 **S1**: Fat

07 **Elena**: Then, we have a verb which is '*engordar*'

08 **S2**: That makes sense

09 **Elena**: (She writes '*engordar*' and '*adelgazar*' on the whiteboard with the  
10 'not equal to' sign  $\neq$  between them) Ok?

11 **SS**: (They nod)

12 **S1**: Would you say ... would it be reflective?

13 **Elena**: ['*Engordar*' is to get fatter ((she holds her hands wide open far from  
14 each other)) and '*adelgazar*' is slimmer ((she transitions from the position where  
15 she had her hands, narrowing the gap between them until her fingertips touch  
16 once her hands are closer enough))]

17 **S1**: Is it not reflective?

18 **T**: No

### Excerpt 18: Agujero (hole)

01 **Elena**: Yes, as well. Ah ... number 6?

02 **S1**: It is getting bigger (pronounced incorrectly)

03 **Elena**: BIGGER (Elena corrects their pronunciation)

04 **S1**: Getting bigger as a result of ...

05 **Elena**: Ok, as a result of, correct. Any different answers?

06 **S2**: Because of?

07 **Elena**: Because of, correct.

08 **S3**: Due to

09 **Elena**: Due to, correct. Very good. Does everyone know what the

10 [ozone layer is? ((at the same time as saying 'ozone' she lifts her right hand up to the  
11 height of her head, then holding and moving the hand from front to back bending  
12 her elbow as if emphasising the creation of a layer))]

13 **SS**: Ozone layer



14 **Elena:** Yes, and the '*agujero*' [what is an '*agujero*'? ((after asking the question, while  
15 students are quiet, she makes a gesture holding her hands in a circle creating a  
16 circular shape that is growing))]

17 **S4:** The what?

18 **Elena:** The '*agujero*' in the ozone layer. What is the ['*agujero*'? ((she repeats the same  
19 gesture while saying '*agujero*'))] [The '*agujero*' is getting bigger ((at the same  
time as

20 saying 'getting bigger' she repeats the previous gesture of making a hole by holding  
21 a circle shape with her hands, however, this time she moves her hands even further  
22 away, expanding the circle and creating a bigger growing movement))]

23 **S5:** Hole?

24 **Elena:** (She nods) A hole.

### Excerpt 19: Cartera (wallet)

01 **S1:** (She was checking her phone but stops to ask this question) Is '*una cartera*' a  
02 purse or a wallet or can it be both?

03 **Fernando:** ((He takes his wallet out of his left pocket as soon as he hears the word  
04 '*cartera*')), [I'd go for wallet ((grabbing the wallet with his left hand to show it to S1  
he

05 starts a shaking movement of the wallet, flagging it while saying 'wallet', which  
06 catches the attention of S1 and S2)), ok?

07 **S1:** Wallet ((she nods and writes it down in her notebook))

08 **Fernando:** ((He puts his wallet back in his pocket))

### Excerpt 20: Cabello (hair)

01 **Elena:** Ok, so, I want to eat a lot of meat at McDonalds, what  
02 do you say to me? What do you recommend?

03 **S1:** Yes

04 **Elena:** Mum?

05 **S1:** I won't let you eat so much food because it's not healthy, it  
06 might be meat from ... meat from ...



07 **S2**: From a '*cabello*'?

08 **Elena**: 'CABALLO' (loud, with her mouth open) No, ['*cabello*' is this ((she grabs  
09 some hair from her head with her left hand as soon as she says '*cabello*' and holds  
10 it while moving it to show it to students until she finishes the sentence))), yes?  
11 '*Caballo*' (well pronounced and slow). I don't think so because '*caballo*' is expensive, isn't it?  
12 Horse meat is expensive, isn't it? [Rat meat? ((gesture as  
13 if disgusted and laughing))]  
14 **SS**: Ahggg

### Excerpt 21: Céspedes (lawn)

01 **S1**: What is '*céspedes*'?

02 **Elena**: Mmm ... Let's see where it is (she looks at the book). [¡Ah! That's the '*céspedes*'  
03 ((she uses her left hand and with her index finger points towards the window as  
04 she says '*céspedes*'. Outside the window there is a green space)), for example.]

05 **SS**: (Students who are near the one who asked the question, turn around to look where the  
06 teacher is indicating)

07 **Elena**: ['Grass' ((she brings together her thumb and fingertips on her left hand  
08 and continues to rub them as if touching and feeling soft leaves of grass with her  
fingers while

09 saying 'grass')) which is in the swimming pool, for example, hmm? Grass?].

10 **S2**: What? (student from the other side of the room who was listening to this  
11 explanation)

12 **S1**: Grass in the pool?

13 **Elena**: [No, not inside ((she brings her hands together, at the same time as saying  
14 'inside', and with her left hand makes a circle and brings the right hand close while  
15 showing inside the circle. Her right hand finishes inside the circle created by the left  
16 hand)) of the water].

17 **SS**: (Students laugh and S1 cover his mouth with his hand while laughing)

18 **Elena**: Swimming pools normally have a lawn around them ... ((she moves her  
19 hands in a semicircle motion starting with both hands going forward and ending  
20 with each hand and arm extended to both her left and right sides, as if she is about to  
21 hug someone. She is indicating surrounding a circular place))]



22 **S2:** What? (the same student from the other side of the room who asked '¿What?'  
a

23 few seconds ago asks the same question again while she tries to listen to  
24 the explanation)

25 **Elena:** The lawn, in number ... (she comes closer to S2 to point at her  
26 book where the word is) number 10. The '*césped*' in number 10 [is the 'grass' ((she  
27 brings her hands together and closes her fingertips as if holding and rubbing an  
28 object))]

29 **Elena:** It is for example [a green colour ((using her index from her left hand to  
30 point while making small circles with her left index finger, guiding students to look  
31 towards the window outside))], yes? The 'grass'.

32 **S2:** Ohhhh ok (and she writes something down)

## Excerpt 22: Correct prepositions

01 **Diana:** So one thing about prepositions, me, for example, I always have a  
02 problem with 'in' and 'on' in English, I never know when you say 'in' and  
03 when you say 'on' because in Spanish they are both '*en*', so I always get it wrong.  
04 And what I do when I am writing a text and I have time is that I go  
05 to Google and write sentences with 'in' and 'on'. And I see which one is used, ok?  
06 So you could do the same, you know when you put in ... your browser you put in the  
07 sentence and examples come up for '*por*' and '*para*'. For example, I'm thinking about '*por*'  
and 08 '*para*' in particular. And examples come up and you can see if it's correct  
09 or not. What I'm saying is that today with the internet it is easy to look for information. You  
also 10 have Linguee, don't you? Which has loads of examples that can help you with  
11 things like prepositions, because often with things like '*por*' and '*para*'  
12 it's often really difficult to know when you have to use it. Ok, any  
13 questions?

## Excerpt 23: Creating a list for linking words

01 **Carmen:** I would even recommend when taking the exam, and I am saying this  
02 based on my own experience. For example, if I have my connectors, '*sin embargo*',  
'*por*'  
03 '*un lado*', '*por otro*' ... all these types of connectors, what I did in written  
04 exams which I did when I was a student is that I note them down at the start. On the sheets  
05 that they will give you for the exam then I continue writing my notes on my  
06 rough copy so that I don't forget these connectors or words, these



07 useful phrases that I can use to start my paragraphs, to join sentences.

#### **Excerpt 24: Moving between the politeness levels of different languages**

01 **S1**: Do you speak French?

02 **Fernando**: I studied French but as an adult. I did French with the modern  
03 languages institute at my previous institution where I used to work, but I can't  
04 remember much of it now. I did something like an intermediate level

05 **S2**: Ahh ok, is it difficult?

06 **Fernando**: It's difficult particularly because I didn't have much time, sometimes I  
07 couldn't attend the classes

08 **S2**: [Oh, ok (nodding)]

09 **Fernando**: But she was a very nice teacher, although my first  
10 French teacher was a bit unpleasant and I remember she could speak Spanish, and she  
addressed me  
11 as 'tú' 'tú' 'tú' (informal you)

12 **SS**: Ahhhh

13 **Fernando**: And I said, well if she says 'tú' 'tú' 'tú' (informal you in Spanish. He was pointing  
towards himself

14 with both hands) to me, I can say 'tu' (pointing towards the front) in French. And

15 she said 'ah, ah, ah, ah, [((authoritative gesture with his index finger)) VOUS' (formal you)]

16 **SS**: Hahaha, yeah ... (smiling)

17 **Fernando**: And I said 'but if I ...'

18 **SS**: [yeah, yeah ... (smiling and nodding)]

19 **Fernando**: Besides, I was a university lecturer too.

20 **S1**: Yeah, because for older people you need to use 'vous' and they are really strict

21 **Fernando**: Yes in Spain you'll see that it's not like that, as Julian said. The advice  
22 is [to listen ((he puts his left hand on his left ear))]. If the person uses *tú* (informal you), you  
use *tú*.

23 And at the beginning if you want to use *usted* (formal you) you can use it. But you'll see that  
generally

24 we use *tú tú tú* (informal you) a lot



25 **SS:** Ahhh ok

26 **Fernando:** We are very informal

## SR session

**Fernando:** Yes, as well in the break if I remember correctly, in the breaks I tell them Grandpa *Cebolleta* stories. Maybe it's not particularly strictly academic, but sometimes when I tell a story it's an anecdote.

**R:** Yes yes yes. And why? Why do you think you use those examples?

**Fernando:** I don't know, maybe because ... It's simply a break, the break is small talk and I use it for small talk with them.

**R:** Of course because I do think they were very attentive and interested.

**Fernando:** No, it's that as well, making the best use, it's that, even though there are breaks, if you can get a couple of minutes of conversation [...] in the breaks we never see anything related to the class, sometimes topics come up or they ask me about songs and I play them.

## Excerpt 25: *Friqui*

01 **S1:** I think it's true because the people who use them the most are male, almost all  
02 my friends who ummm ... play video games are masculine?

03 **Fernando:** They are guys, right?

04 **S1:** Hmm yes

05 **Fernando:** And do you like video games?

06 **S1:** No

07 **SS:** (They shake their heads)

08 **Fernando:** Nobody? Nobody?

09 **SS:** No (they shake their heads)

10 **Fernando:** (((He smiles and put his right hand on his heart)) When I was at  
11 university ((he puts his left hand on top of his right hand)) I liked it  
12 a lot]

13 **SS:** Hahaha



14 **Fernando**: I was a bit of a geek, no? [Which would be '*friqui*' in Spanish (he stands up to

15 come closer to the whiteboard and takes the cap off the marker pen)]

16 **S2**: Did you like war games?

17 **Fernando**: I liked strategy games

18 **S2**: Ah ok (she smiles and nods)

19 **Fernando**: Because [ehhhm (he writes '*friqui*' on the whiteboard)] when I was young,

20 when I was a student at university, the computers were not very

21 advanced, yes? It was the time of ... pfff, 'Medal of Honor' was not around.

22 **SS**: Hahaha

23 **Fernando**: So it was a long, long time ago. Good, everyone ok?

24 Mónica, please, what do you think of D?

## SR session

**R**: Here you are talking to them about the question about video games and you give them an example 02 from your personal life. Why did you use that example?

**Fernando**: Because I started to realise that the question wasn't going to give me much scope so what I did was to give them a little example and I realised that I could introduce the word '*friqui*'.

## Excerpt 26: Intralingual diversity

01 **Fernando**: This happened to me in the United States, when I went to work ... You British people when you

02 say 'thank you', you say 'you are welcome'. But people in the

03 United States when you say 'thank you', they say 'uhmmmm'

04 **SS**: Hahahaha

05 **S1**: What?

06 **S2**: Why do they do that?

07 **Fernando**: I don't know, but it surprised me because when I was saying 'thank you',

08 they were saying 'mmmm' ...

09 **SS**: Hahahaha



10 **S2**: What?

11 **S3**: Who said that?

12 **Fernando**: Just to show that it's different even in countries where they speak the  
13 same language

14 **S2**: Is it in Spain, you know, that if you just go, like, 'hey, you ok?' and you just  
15 walk off without saying 'fine' ... Is it in Spain they expect you to reply ... and have a  
16 conversation

17 **Fernando**: Ehmmm ... in Spain they only expect you to reply if for example I  
18 ask you and I say, 'how are you?' and you say 'good'. That's fine. But if I ask you 'how  
19 are you?' and you say 'PFFF not good'. Then they want to talk.

20 **S2**: Ohhhh, I think it was in Italy then that they will want to start a conversation

21 **Fernando**: It's the same in Spain, ok? You say 'hi', 'hi', 'how are you?', 'good', ok?  
22 But if 'how are you?', 'bad', it's like 'let's have a coffee, let's go for a coffee'

23 **S2**: Ahhh

## Interview

**R**: Do you use examples from your own experience [...]?

**Fernando**: Yes, I think I have done occasionally. Sometimes I have talked about  
how presents are received in each country or also for example the way we have to  
say 'you're welcome'. In the United States people don't say it much, but what  
people do is say 'hmmmmm' [...] Yes, they seem to like it a lot, they think it's funny

## Excerpt 27: Spanglish

01 **Diana**: But for me one thing that is really interesting about Spanglish is this  
02 this disparaging obsession with Spanglish, I always, I ... don't  
03 agree because to speak Spanglish often you have to know how to speak  
04 Spanish and English. There is a very interesting article about how  
05 Spanglish works. For example I speak Spanglish at home, ok? A lot!  
06 I speak Spanglish a lot! And I have to make an effort when I am teaching  
07 not to speak it, because at home my husband is English and speaks Spanish and English,  
08 and me too. And there are some words that sound better in English than in Spanish  
and  
09 you are speaking Spanish and an English word pops up, and you use it, right?



10 **S1**: It's totally natural (written message in the chat)

11 **Diana**: But the grammar is correct, yes? You're just using words in Spanish

12 and in English. And it's so easy to use Spanglish, ha, ha, so easy that

13 I am very fond of Spanglish.

## **SR session**

**Diana**: Yes, yes, this conversation continued in the forum and Noemi said that often it was laziness, it was laziness. I like Spanglish a lot but I think that Spanglish is a big problem because if we don't pay attention to Spanish it is going to lose a lot and English is going to take over and the language may change because of this 05 to English. For me it's a problem, so when I am writing my shopping list it goes '*pan*', 06 'lentils' and as my husband speaks Spanish too and we speak Spanish at home. I 07 know that it's pure laziness and I am very aware of it, that I must not use Spanglish.

**R**: And why did you use this example then in class, your example?

**Diana**: Well to tell them that it is normal, I think, I don't know, often I speak about myself, but I don't know anyone else who does it. To tell them that It's normal. And in fact Noemi then said that she did it too. I use certain words in English when I am speaking Spanish [...]



## Appendix 13. NVivo analysis sample

PhD Spanish teachers mediation practices (NVivo 12)-wrk-file-live-3.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

**Nodes**

Name	Files	References
estrategias	2	2
Comparisons	10	13
Diccionario	3	5
ejemplos cercanos al estudiante	10	36
Games	9	20
High Collab	4	13
Humor]	15	57
Listening tasks	1	3
Oral tasks	4	13
Paraphrasing	15	36
Insufficient paraphrasing	1	1
Ejemplos claros	8	14
Pronunciation	4	5
real world	5	6
scaffolding	4	11
lengua	19	121
Direct Translation OR NOT	19	100
A) DIRECT TRANSLATIONS	5	10
B) SUPPORTED TRANSITIONS	5	16

**Paraphrasing**

Reference 1 - 3.50% Coverage

R: Video 7309 minuto 06:47 un estudiante pregunta que es césped y ella en vez de traducir ingles primero , utiliza técnicas como de gestos, ejemplos en una frase con esa palabra...pero estudiantes no lo entienden rápido

Reference 2 - 8.26% Coverage

R: Video 0014 minuto 02:55 , la profesora pregunta Haribo que es? T: bueno pero en español , ahora es más popular. Haribo es una marca, pero que es eso? S: sweets T: recordáis cuando hablamos de las comidas, de los alimentos S: dulces T: Dulces si, ¿pero algo mas en concreto BON.... T: no, eso es en francés. And she starts writing on the blackboard SS: golosinasss>

P: " Haribo, pensé que en espana no se entenderia haribo , intuí que no se acordarian de lo era. Hay que ver la palabra 7 veces para recordarla.

<Files\\SRP\\E\\E.2srp\\SRP2 E> - \$ 1 reference coded [2.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.60% Coverage

R: Claro si, aqui con los homeless la descripción y la definición que le diste fue a lo techo y entonces te vuelven a preguntar pero quieres decir? y le dijiste es que no tenemos una palabra.

PhD Spanish teachers mediation practices (NVivo 12)-wrk-file-live-3.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

**Nodes**

Name	Files	References
non verbal	9	12
Gestures	10	87
Fostering SS participation, encouragin or corre	5	18
Gaze	1	2
Head	4	9
manage classroom	6	11
mimic	3	3
pointing	3	3
Reinforcing term with gesture	8	41
Reinforcing explanation with gesture	5	17
Replacing word with gesture	5	13
Students' gestures	3	6
Pizarra o escribir (visual aid)	7	32
Pointer Online	2	3
reflexiones profes	3	4

**Replacing word with gesture**

S: Que es césped?

T: mmm... a ver donde está (she looks at the book). Ah! La hierba es eso (She points at the o "la hierba que esta en la piscina por ejemplo, grass"

S: In the pool?

T: No, no dentro. And then she says or the whole class "las piscinas normalmente estan rode cesped

S:Que?

T: El cesped, en el Nmero 10 es la hierba, es por ejemplo eso de color verde, the grass

Reference 2 - 0.30% Coverage

S: Que es pisar?

T: Pisar es esto (and he makes the gesture)

S: Cesped?

T: Cesped is the grass. Puedo borrar?