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TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE AND TEACHING OF MEDIATION IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Abstract

In 2018 the Companion Volume of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR CV) introduced the concept of mediation and defined it as an act of language that makes communication possible among people who are unable to communicate with each other. This paper investigates secondary and primary school language teachers' attitudes towards the concept of mediation. The analysis takes into account qualitative and quantitative data collected within the European project TEMPLATE —TEchnology-Mediated PLurilingual Activities for (language) Teacher Education (<https://templateplurilingualism.eu/>). The aim of the project is to strengthen the competences of pre- and in-service language or CLIL teachers who want to implement the recommendations of the Council of Europe for the use of plurilingual approaches.

1. Introduction

In the next paragraph the State of the Art about mediation and the academic research about teacher attitudes will be presented. Moreover, the aims of the present research will be described.

1.1 State of the Art

The main aim of this paper is to describe Spanish language teachers' attitudes towards mediation. The study and analysis of teachers' attitudes is

¹ All the paragraphs were written collaboratively by both authors.

an important field of research. Indeed, many studies about it have been conducted. Attitudes towards different topics have been analysed in order to define teachers' profiles. For example, Mitits (2018) investigated Primary and Secondary school teachers' attitude towards multilingualism in Greece. The study was conducted through a quantitative methodology in which a questionnaire was administered to 60 teachers. The analysis of the survey led to some interesting conclusions: even though teachers recognize the importance of multilingualism, in Greek schools multilingual practices rarely include references to the first language of the multilingual students present in class.

More generally, teachers' attitudes about their own performance have also been analysed. A comparative study about Chinese Native Speakers (NS) Teachers and Chinese Non-Native Speakers (NNS) Teachers in the UK has been conducted by Yang (2019). Thanks to a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews, Yang could conclude that NS found some difficulties in adapting to the English teaching approaches. On the other hand, NNS teachers do not encounter this difficulty, having been educated in that context. However, they feel the need to constantly examine their 'accuracy of knowledge' before teaching some specific topic to students.

Language teachers' attitudes have also been investigated in research that combines qualitative and quantitative results. For example, teachers' attitudes towards the use of ICTs have also been investigated in academic research following a mixed-based methodology, in the study conducted by Izquierdo *et al.* (2017). In particular, they analysed the situation in Mexico and concluded that teachers' attitude towards the use of ICTs is positive, since they are willing to use technology to enhance their teaching. Nevertheless, they usually do not use the available institutional technologies, but they prefer to use their personal devices. They behave in this way because they encounter some limitations in accessing the facilities, technical support and training. They also feel limited by the school policies and regulations. The present paper will describe a similar methodology. Teachers' attitudes will be indeed studied from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. The paper will also analyse pre-service teachers' attitudes. In literature, pre-service teachers' attitudes have been already studied as well. For example, Shobiye, Uleanya, Taiwo and Uleanya (2019) studied pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the benefits and challenges of EFL writing portfolios in Chile. Through a mixed methodology composed of a questionnaire and a focus group, they could conclude that despite the initial scepticism, after having compiled a portfolio, pre-service teacher-students consider this practice a positive one that allows many benefits in relation to the learning of

vocabulary and grammar, and more generally in relation to academic writing.

Even though this is frequently the object of study of academic research, there is still very scarce literature about teachers' attitudes towards mediation. The main reason for this lack of research can be related to the recent inclusion of this topic in the Companion Volume. Only in 2018, indeed, mediation was fully included in this document. The CV is a complement to the CEFR (2001), and its aim is mainly to update the 2001 set of descriptors and scales (Council of Europe 2018: 23), in order to make the document more consistent with the characteristics of current societies. Since mediation is included in this document published by the Council of Europe, it is relevant to study the use and teaching of it in class. Indeed, Spanish academic research has always focused on the implementation of the recommendations of the CEFR. For example, Mur-Dueñas *et al.* (2013) studied Spanish Secondary School Students' oral competence in EFL by analysing their self-assessment, teacher assessment and tasks. In this study, the CEFR and the European recommendation are frequently taken into account. In particular, the study highlights the fact that the students pass their exams and receive good marks, even though their teachers do not think that they reach the CEFR level required. Therefore, the type of assessment should be reconsidered in order to align it with the characteristics of the CEFR level. Similarly, Pavón and Pérez (2018) analysed how the recommendations of the European policy on the inclusion of multilingualism at school are implemented in Spain. The main finding of the research is the following: in Spain there are some school language projects that aim at promoting/emphasizing plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, nevertheless in Spain the attention on the inclusion of multilingualism in the curriculum is not homogeneous. Educational authorities, indeed, do not mandate schools to create plurilingual whole-school projects, with the exception of bilingual regions.

After having analysed the importance of studying teachers' attitudes and the implementation of the CEFR recommendation in schools, in the following paragraphs a definition of mediation will be provided together with a description of its role and importance.

Mediation can be defined as the act of communication that allows possible communication between two people who are not able to communicate with each other. For example, thanks to the reformulation of a source text, it becomes intelligible to those who do not have the ability, for whatever reason, to understand it (Council of Europe 2018: 32).

In the last few years, mediation has become increasingly important in the field of learning and teaching foreign languages, after 25 years in which it has gradually been included in the language curriculum. This evolution

can be retraced in the development of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), an official document produced by the Council of Europe, which provides some guidelines for the elaboration of language syllabuses and the establishment of assessing criteria. One of its main contributions has been a six-point scale to assess the mediation competence (from A1 to C2) (Council of Europe 2018).

In the first drafts of the CEFR, dated 1996, mediation was already present and described as a communicative language activity. In the official CEFR, published in 2001, mediation was already included. Nevertheless, the information related to it was relatively scarce. The language user was considered as an intermediary; however the only strategies listed as part of mediation were interpretation and translation (Piccardo 2020).

In the course of time, societies have become increasingly globalized, which involves the necessity for citizens to be able to mediate. The Council of Europe (2015), indeed, states

[i]n modern democracies, political participation presupposes a capacity for verbal mediation. [...] [F]or societies as complex as those of the present day [...] cultural and linguistic diversity is no longer a matter of separate compartments (Council of Europe 2015: 63).

This is one of the reasons why they published the Companion Volume (CV) in 2018. Therefore, not only was mediation included in the CV, but it was also

the longest and most complex part of the project that led to the production of this CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2018: 22).

Mediation is included both in the category of ‘communicative language activities’ and in that of ‘communicative language strategies’. As far as the first category is concerned, 19 scales are introduced. As for the second category, 5 scales are introduced. In Figure 1 (Council of Europe 2020: 90), mediation scales are illustrated.

Furthermore, the CV introduces a new definition of language user. When mediating, she/he becomes a social agent who collaborates in the construction and communication of a new meaning, using mediation strategies appropriate “in relation to the conventions, conditions and constraints of the communicative context” (Council of Europe 2018: 26).

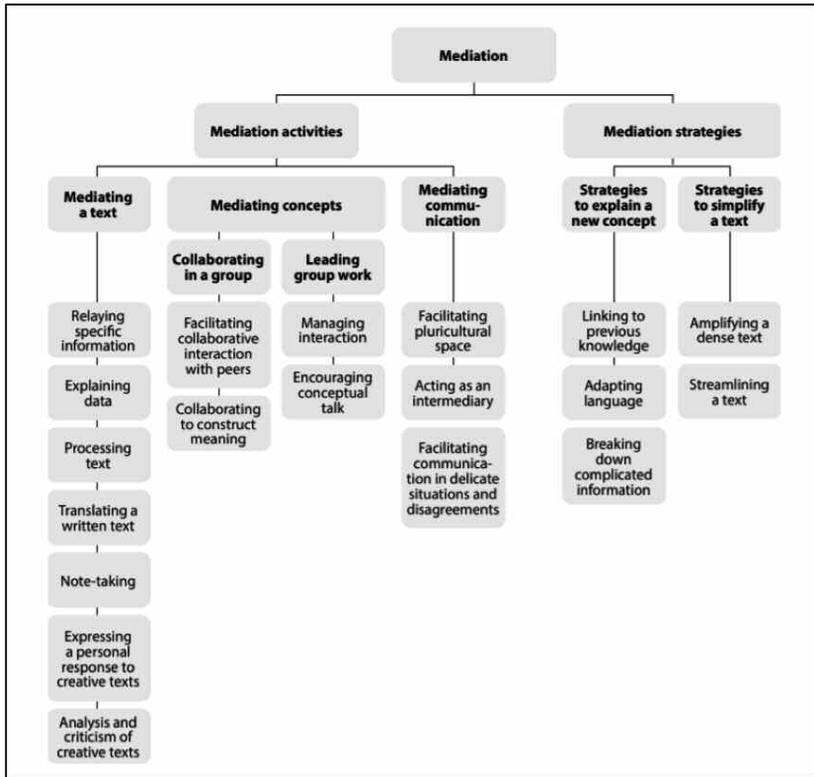


Figure 1. Mediation Scales in the CV (Council of Europe 2020: 90)

Other than in the CV, the increasing importance of mediation can be noticed in literature. Piccardo (2012: 287) claims that mediation creates a link between the social dimension and the individual one. Mediation can be considered as

a social practice which occurs in order to facilitate communication between parties not sharing the same language (Stathopoulou 2013: 351).

Therefore, mediation allows the user to use language as a tool useful for: creating pluricultural spaces; reducing affective blocks and tensions due to the risks of misunderstanding; for building bridges towards the new/the other, allowing the language users to understand each other (Piccardo 2019).

Moreover, the job market has been giving increasing importance to mediation as well. Nowadays the labour market requires people to possess

The graph below shows radio and television audiences throughout the day in 1992. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

Radio and television audiences in UK, October – December 1992

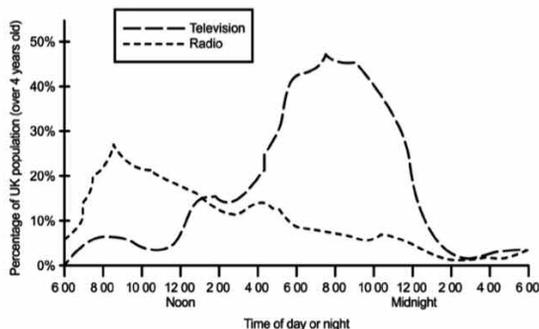


Figure 2. Writing task (IELTS 2015)

transferable communication skills, to be able to collaborate and to adapt to change, since “the skilled work is becoming more communicative and team-oriented” and it values “flexible communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking” (Goodier 2020: 20). Mediation can-do statements included in the CV describe these requirements since they involve collaboration, teamwork, and the ability to adapt communication to context (Goodier 2020). A consequence of this can be observed, for example, in the structure of some language certifications. For example, the English language certificate IELTS provided by the British Council includes a mediation task in the written test section. The candidate has to summarize in a written text a visual input. An example can be found in Figure 2.

The Council of Europe and the literature seem to suggest that mediation is now fundamental in the field of learning and teaching languages. Hence, it is essential to be able to mediate in order to be an active citizen and worker. For this reason, some research has been conducted on mediation. For example, Cheng and Cheng (2012) investigate the role of mediation in secondary schools in China, focusing on the ability of EFL teachers to mediate learning. Through some observation in class and some interviews, it was possible to conclude that most of the teachers were unable to mediate students’ learning because of Chinese EFL learners’ weakness in English language communication competence.

Another interesting and recent study is the one conducted by Poehner and Leontjev (2020) who examined how a mediational approach during dynamic assessment (DA), instead of a corrective one, can help in identifying learners' difficulties and in supporting their learning. In the study, they report and analyse some data collected through two studies already analysed in Leontjev (2016), focusing on the mediational process. Thus, the analysed studies are about DA conducted in Estonia with English students attending Secondary School. This analysis led to the following conclusion: a mediational approach in DA allows the learners to progress towards a successful and independent understanding of the L2. Similarly, Davin *et al.* (2017) studied the ability to mediate in da of two in-service language teachers from Colombia and of two pre-service teachers from the USA. The study was conducted through some direct observations in assessment situations before and after some workshops about da that were proposed to the teachers. Before the training teachers encountered some difficulties in mediating when assessing, while after it their ability improved.

Even though mediation is present in the CV, and it is the objective of some academic studies, it is not yet fully included in the language curriculum in language courses in Spain. Nadales and Valderrama's study (2020) explores how mediation is implemented in Spain in the Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas (EOI – Official Language Schools). In their article, they argue that the studies about mediation are still scarce in number and the topic needs further investigation. Regarding the implementation in schools, teachers seem to need training. They encounter various difficulties in teaching and evaluating mediation, as for example the lack of clear evaluation criteria and the difficulty in creating teaching materials.

To conclude, in accordance with the CV, mediation has an important role in language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, among all the studies about teachers' attitudes and about the implementation of the recommendations of the CEFRL/CV, the existing literature about mediation is scarce. The aim of this paper is to provide qualitative and quantitative data to investigate teachers' attitude towards mediation and to analyse the use and teaching of it in class.

1.2 *Objective and Research Questions*

The present research has the objective of investigating teachers' attitude towards mediation in the English language classes in Spain. In order to accomplish the main objective of the study three research questions were formulated:

RQ1. Do Spanish teachers know what mediation means? And what is their attitude?

RQ2. Are they aware of using mediation strategies when teaching?

RQ3. Do they teach students to use these strategies? Through which practices is mediation taught or used in class and to which extent?

2. *Method*

In the next sections the *TEMPLATE* project will be presented. This research was indeed included in this Erasmus project. Furthermore, the methodology will be described.

2.1 *The TEMPLATE Project*

The present study was conducted within a European Erasmus+ K201 project, *TEMPLATE*, which involves five partners: the Università degli Studi di Torino (Italy), the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), the Universitat Jaume I de Castellon (Spain), the Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd (Germany) and the Vilniaus Universitetas (Lithuania). The acronym *TEMPLATE* stands for *TE*chnology-Mediated *PL*urilingual *A*ctivities for (language) *T*eacher *E*ducation (<https://templateplurilinguism.eu/>). The main aim of the project is to strengthen the professional competences of pre- and in-service language or *CLIL* teachers who want to fully implement the recommendations of the Council of Europe for the use of plurilingual approaches in language education.

As one of the first steps in the project, a survey was distributed to primary and secondary education foreign language and *CLIL* teachers in the five countries. However, as social media were used to disseminate it, there were a few respondents also from the Netherlands, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, the USA and the UK. The survey asked about the teachers' use, knowledge and attitude on the use of technology and plurilingualism in the language classes. As a complement, a focus group interview was organised in which 4 teachers from Spain, Germany, Belgium and Lithuania participated together with the interviewer. They were asked about their use of technologies and the effect of *COVID-19* on this use. In addition, they were also asked about their plurilingual practices. Furthermore, the five countries organised local focus groups meetings in order to delve into these matters.

In this wider context, it was possible to extract some useful data for investigating teachers' attitude towards mediation in the English language classes in Spain. This investigation takes into account some quantitative

data collected by means of the analysis of the survey produced within the *TEMPLATE* project, while qualitative data have been collected through the analysis of teachers' focus groups' interviews, organised by the *TEMPLATE* project as well. Both the survey and the interviews were originally designed to examine teachers' attitude towards the use of technology and plurilingualism in class, nevertheless some questions were related to mediation.

2.2 Participants

In the next session the profile of the participants will be described. The first section is dedicated to the description of the participants in the survey. The second one will be devoted to the description of the teachers who took part in the interview.

2.2.1 Participants in the survey

The total pool of participants in the survey consisted of 216 people. Almost all of them were in-service language or CLIL teachers from different countries, mainly from the five country partners of the project. 73 teachers were from Spain and 31 of them were teaching English. In the next paragraph, the profile of the Spanish teachers will be described.

Figure 3 shows a graph about the age of the participants. Almost half of the teachers (48%) were between 41 and 50 years old. As a consequence, the majority of them were experienced teachers who had already had the opportunity to be in service for many years. 22% of the participants were between 31 and 40 years old. The remaining 30% was composed of young people (15% aged from 21 and 25 years old; 15% from 26 to 30), who represent very young and inexperienced teachers or pre-service teachers.

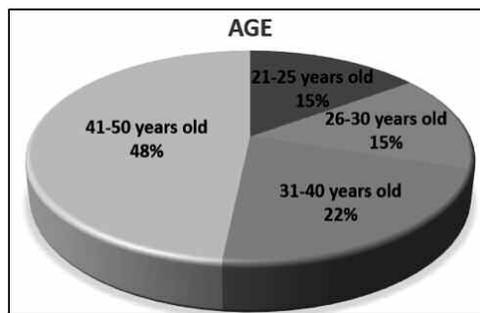


Figure 3. Age of the participants

A more in-depth study about the level of experience of the teachers can be conducted by observing the chart in Figure 4. The pie chart shows that 23% of participants were pre-service teachers, namely students training to become teachers. The majority of the participants (61%) were in-service teachers. They were almost equally divided into CLIL teachers (29%) and language teachers (32%). These data reflect the importance given by the Spanish education system to the CLIL context. The minority of the participants (16%) classified themselves as ‘other’: PhD students, teachers who would like to teach their subject using a foreign language (CLIL) or teachers for students with Special Needs.

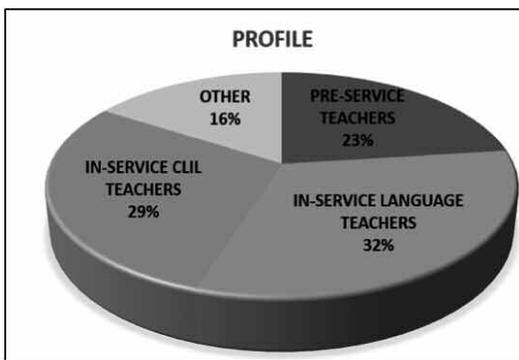


Figure 4. Profile of the participants

The pie chart in Figure 5 shows the target student population of the in-service teachers who participated in the survey. The large majority of them (55%) were Secondary School teachers; 33% taught in Lower-Secondary while 22% in Upper-Secondary. Only 26% of the teachers worked in Primary School, while a minority (19%) worked in Tertiary Education.

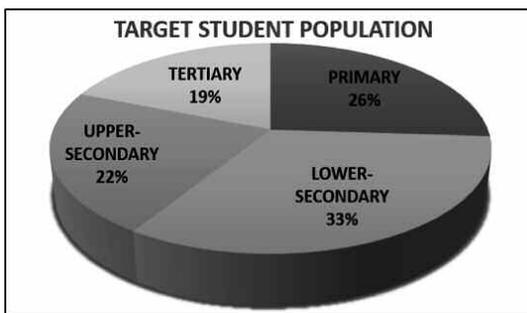


Figure 5. Target student population

2.2.2 Participants in the Interview

The pool of participants that took part in the interview (Focus Group) was significantly lower in comparison with the participants in the survey: only three teachers, all of them women, were interviewed. One (C.) worked in Primary education, while the other two (M. and G.) worked in Secondary School.

2.3 *Materials and Procedure*

As stated before, the data used for the present study were collected through a survey and some interviews (focus group). In the next sections the questionnaire and the focus group will be described together with the procedure used for the administration of the survey and for conducting the interview.

2.3.1 The survey

The survey was designed by the *TEMPLATE* team, i.e. professors, PhD students and researchers of the five universities that are partners in the project. In particular, l'Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium) was in charge of the survey creation with the collaboration of the partners. The survey was firstly written in English, then translated into French, German, Italian, Lithuanian and Spanish. The survey was distributed through various channels and was officially accessible for 10 days. After that time, it was possible to analyse the results. A post on the official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/template.eu>) was created with the aim of inviting people to take part in it. Furthermore, during the Meet and Greet event, the survey was announced and later the members of the team spread the link among teachers and students that could be interested. The digital tool used for the creation and translation of the questionnaire was Qualtrics, a software designed for the creation of surveys.

The survey consisted of 68 questions. 9 questions had the aim to outline the profile of the teachers previously described in section 2.2. 21 questions were about the attitude of teachers towards the use of technology in class, while 32 questions were related to the attitude towards the use/teaching of plurilingual/pluricultural competences. Among this latter group of questions, 16 questions were related to mediation, even though mediation was not explicitly named. The questionnaire was adapted to the profile of the

respondents and statements were used in order to raise their awareness and to help them self-report their reactions. An extract from the survey with the most interesting statements on mediation is reported below.

For the following statements, please choose one answer (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree).

- People from other cultural backgrounds should behave (e.g. physical proximity, greeting habits, turn taking, ...) like me so we can communicate more easily.
- When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, we should communicate in one language only.
- When communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds, I find it difficult to (re)explain something when people misunderstand what I mean(t).
- I find it difficult to make adjustments in my communication (e.g. avoidance of certain topics, of humour, changes in the level of formality, ...) if the person I am talking to comes from a different cultural background.
- I don't mind adjusting my behaviour to avoid misinterpretation.
- I can understand some words and expressions in languages that I don't know.
- When teaching in one language, I may use words of another language in the same sentence to make it easier to communicate.
- When teaching learners from different cultural backgrounds, I make adjustments in my communication (if necessary) when talking to them.
- I encourage my learners to identify common behaviours from their cultural background and explain them to someone from another cultural background.

The statements included in the questionnaire do not make reference to mediation explicitly. Nevertheless, they can all be related to it. Indeed, it is possible to notice the relation between them and the activities and strategies listed in the CV (Figure 1). Statements A, C, D, H and I are all related to communication in pluricultural contexts. Facilitating pluricultural space is one of the mediation activities that are labelled in the CV as 'mediating communication'. Statement E can be related to this category as well. Indeed, 'adjusting behaviour in order to avoid misinterpretation' can be considered an ability for 'facilitating communication in difficult situations' (Figure 1). Statements B, C and G are about language. The fact of using language as a tool to mediate can be considered one example of mediation strategy. The

CV indeed considers ‘adapting language’ a ‘strategy to explain a new concept’.

2.3.2 The Focus Group

Focus group refers to small group meetings for interviews that were organised within the TEMPLATE project. The aim of the focus groups is to further investigate the topic already present in the survey and in particular to collect some qualitative data. The participants in the survey were asked to inform the team of their availability to participate in the interviews. There was an international focus group and some national focus groups were also organised in the following months. The Spanish focus group involved three teachers and lasted one hour. The interview contained six questions related to technology and five about plurilingual competences. A specific section was explicitly devoted to mediation. This section mainly consists of the following three questions:

- What is mediation for you?
- Do you explicitly teach mediation in class?
- Do you plan activities to teach mediation?

The results of the survey and of the Spanish focus groups will be described in the following section.

3. *Results*

The objective of the present research was to investigate the teachers’ attitude towards mediation in the language classes in Spain. The overall results of the questionnaire and of the focus groups will be described in the next sections.

3.1 *Research Question 1*

In this section, the findings that were collected in order to answer RQ1 will be described. In the following subsections both quantitative data (collected through the survey) and qualitative data (collected during the interview) will be presented.

3.1.1 Survey Results

In this section the results related to RQ1 will be analysed from both a quantitative point of view and from a qualitative one. RQ1 is: Do Spanish teachers know what mediation means? And what is their attitude?

As previously explained, this study consists of a survey and an interview. The survey provided quantitative data to investigate the teachers' attitude towards mediation. Table 1 shows the answers to some questions included in the questionnaire.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. People from other cultural backgrounds should behave (e.g. physical proximity, greeting habits, turn taking, ...) like me so we can communicate more easily.	4.11%	8.22%	31.51%	56.16%
B. When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, we should communicate in one language only.	13.70%	13.70%	32.88%	39.73%
C. When communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds, I find it difficult to (re)explain something when people misunderstand what I mean(t).	6.85%	20.55%	41.10%	31.51%
D. I find it difficult to make adjustments in my communication (e.g. avoidance of certain topics, of humour, changes in the level of formality, ...) if the person I am talking to comes from a different cultural background.	6.85%	20.55%	17.81%	54.79%
E. I don't mind adjusting my behaviour to avoid misinterpretations	56.16%	34.25%	2.74%	6.85%
F. I can understand some words and expressions in languages that I don't know	41.10%	46.58%	9.59%	2.74%

Table 1. Results of some questions included in the questionnaire

Sentences A, C, D and E are particularly significant to analyse the attitude of teachers towards cultural mediation. Question A reveals that the large majority of teachers (56.6%) accept the fact that someone with a different cultural background behaves differently, while only 4.11% of them prefer the presence of homogeneous behaviours. Sentence E is similar to sentence A. The answers as well are very similar. The majority of the teachers (56.16%) do not mind changing their behaviour to avoid misinterpretations, while only a small percentage (6.85%) avoid these kinds of modifications.

Sentence C is about the ability to use mediation strategies in order to (re)explain a particular concept to avoid misinterpretations. The highest rate of response is 41.10% and it corresponds to the option “somewhat disagree”. Therefore, the majority of the participants are generally able to use the strategy of rephrasing (or similar ones) in order to explain something to someone with a different cultural background. 20.55% of the teachers chose the option “somewhat agree”. That means that they sometimes successfully use this strategy. On the other hand, 31.51% use it always or almost always and they succeed in it. Only a small minority (6.85%) find it difficult to use these kinds of strategies.

Sentence D is about the ability to adjust communication when talking with someone from a different cultural background. Similarly to question A, the large majority (54.79%) is able to make these kinds of adjustments, while only the small minority (6.85%) is not.

The remaining two sentences (B and F) are more focused on the use of the language. In accordance with the answers given to question B, the majority of the participants (39.73%) accept the usage of more languages in a conversation, while a small minority (13.70%) do not. It is relevant to underline that a considerable number of teachers opted for the options “somewhat agree” (13.70%) and “somewhat disagree” (32.88%). Consequently, many teachers do not have a net position about the use of code-switching and translanguaging.

Sentence F is about the ability to understand words and expressions of an unknown language. The majority of the teachers (46.58%) answered with “somewhat agree” meaning that usually they possess this ability. 41.10% of the participants are always able to put this skill into practice, while only 2.74% are rarely or never capable of it.

3.1.2 Focus Group Results

After having analysed the answers given to the survey, in this section the data collected through the interview will be described. As explained in

the method section, the focus group was particularly relevant for the collection of qualitative data. As far as RQ1 is concerned, the following answers will be considered to underline the teachers' definition of mediation.

(1) "Mediation is the act of teaching in another way or using accessible words. It is a way to help the students to communicate the information they are not able to transmit".² (G.)

According to quotation (1), mediation is a set of strategies used by the teachers to be easily understood or to help the student to communicate some difficult information. In addition, as can be seen in (2), the primary education teacher claimed as follows:

(2) "If necessary, I use other languages. [...] Sometimes I plan the comparison of languages. I plan this because I think this is a way to teach students and to give a different perspective". (C.)

Her answer reveals the kinds of strategies that sometimes she uses in class. For example, she uses translanguaging and she also plans to include the comparison of languages in her explanations in order to facilitate the learning process using a comparative perspective.

3.2 Research Question 2

The present section will describe the data collected in order to answer RQ2: Are they (the teachers) aware of using mediation strategies when teaching? In order to answer this question, only the answers given during the interview have been taken into account. In the following paragraphs, one sentence from each teacher interviewed will be analysed.

(3) "I have just planned the comparison of languages and say "there is this connection" or "see how different the languages you know are" (...) "in Castilian or Valencian this happens; in English it is different or it is similar (...)". (C.)

In (3), C., the primary education teacher, states that she actually plans the inclusion of contrastive or comparative elements in her explanations.

² The interview was held in Spanish and Valencian (a variety of Catalan) and the quotations have been translated by the authors of this article.

However, as can be seen in (4), G. does not plan to use mediation strategies. Indeed, she claims to use visual elements, such as a video.

- (4) “I do not plan. When students do not understand I use another strategy (mediation strategy). For example, I look for a video”. (G.)

It is also important to highlight the fact that she mentions the use of visual elements (i.e. videos) as a mediation tool. While C. focuses more on verbal elements in order to facilitate the understanding of her lessons, G. uses non-verbal elements only when necessary. It is interesting to examine a third point of view, the one expressed in (5).

- (5) “I think we improvise. In interactive exercises (dialogues), when the students have difficulties, I help them to find a way to make the conversation work”. (M.)

Similarly to G., M. does not plan the use of mediation strategies in her lessons. She does not use them during the explanations, only in order to facilitate peer-to-peer communication.

In conclusion, the statements given by the three teachers reveal that they are aware of using mediation strategies in class when teaching, though they acknowledge they do not plan them in advance.

3.3 *Research Question 3*

In this section, we will describe the findings that were collected in order to answer RQ3, which in turn consists of two questions: Do they (the teachers) teach students to use these strategies? Through which practices is mediation taught or used in class and to which extent? In the following subsections both quantitative data (collected through the survey) and qualitative data (collected during the interview) will be analysed.

3.3.1 The survey

The TEMPLATE questionnaire contained three statements that were useful to examine the use and teaching of mediation. Table 2 displays these sentences.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
G. When teaching in one language, I may use words of another language in the same sentence to make it easier to communicate.	69.23%	23.08%	6.15%	1.54%
H. When teaching learners from different cultural backgrounds, I make adjustments in my communication (if necessary) when talking to them	66.15%	30.77%	1.54%	1.54%
I. I encourage my learners to identify common behaviours from their cultural background and explain them to someone from another cultural background.	60%	35.38%	4.62%	0%

Table 2. Results of the statements included in the questionnaire

Sentences G and H are particularly significant to investigate the use of mediation in class. The large majority of teachers often facilitate communication in class by using other languages (69.23%), while a very small minority (1.54%, only one participant) tend to avoid the usage of translanguaging. Similarly, 66.15% of the teachers make adjustments in communication when teaching to students with another cultural background. Again, only one participant (1.54%) never uses this kind of strategy.

Sentence I is about multiculturalism strategies. This practice can be very useful to train students to dialogue with people from other cultures, by learning first the differences with their own culture. The large majority of the participants (60%) encourage students to do so. It is relevant to underline that no participant (0%) selected the option “strongly disagree”. Therefore no one completely avoids teaching how to identify behaviours in different cultures.

3.3.2 The Focus Group

In this section, two answers given during the interview will be analysed. They are particularly relevant in order to investigate to which extent mediation strategies are taught in class.

One secondary school teacher claims that in class she teaches this kind of strategy. For example, she encourages students to use hypernyms when they do not know the specific hyponym.

- (6) “We teach these strategies, for example if they do not know the name of a specific fruit, they can say the general name”. (G.)

G. also explains the contexts in which this kind of mediation strategy is used in class. They mainly practise the use of hypernyms in oral lessons, in particular for role-play activities.

- (7) “We do it in role-play activities: for example, there was an exercise in which one student was the patient and the other the nurse or the doctor. They did not know the vocabulary (*measure the temperature; vaccinate*) so they could use more general vocabulary”. (G.)

To sum up, in accordance with the answers given in the interview, teachers explain the use of some mediation strategies in class, particularly in relation to vocabulary (use of general hypernyms instead of specific hyponyms), though they do not do it regularly and with a pre-established purpose.

4. Discussion

The present paper aimed at investigating teachers' attitude towards mediation in language classes in Spain. In particular, various elements were studied: teachers' definitions of mediation; their awareness about the use of mediation strategies in class; and their use or teaching of mediation.

The methodology used was quite effective and allowed the investigation of the elements listed above. The questionnaire and the focus group were indeed useful to collect relevant data, both of qualitative and quantitative nature. These data are particularly significant in order to analyse the ability of teachers to use and teach mediation. This aspect indeed is not sufficiently analysed in literature. Nadales and Valderrama's study (2020) analysed this aspect, but only in the EOIS' context. In the current paper a broader context was taken into account.

As far as the attitude towards mediation is concerned, the survey was a useful instrument to prove that teachers' attitude is generally positive. They accept the fact that people with different backgrounds have different behaviours and they try to modify their own behaviour and communication in order to avoid misinterpretation. As far as language is concerned, they

are able to understand some words in the languages they do not know and, as a consequence, they accept the practice of translanguaging when speaking with someone who speaks a different language.

The focus group was useful to collect data to answer RQ1 and RQ2, in particular to outline teachers' definition of mediation: for them, mediation is the language act that facilitates communication. Mediation is also a teaching practice that involves the comparison of languages in order to learn/teach a foreign language. This kind of definition is particularly relevant because it highlights the fact that teachers use mediation strategies while teaching some aspects of the language (RQ2). As previously analysed, they also use non-verbal elements in order to facilitate communication in class. One of the teachers interviewed, for example, uses videos when her students are not able to understand some explanations. Thanks to the interviews, it was also possible to understand that not only is mediation used to facilitate teacher-student communication, but also to facilitate peer-to-peer one. It is important to highlight the fact that although teachers use mediation strategies, they generally do not plan it in advance, but they use it only when necessary. They only plan the comparison of languages to teach the foreign language from a different perspective.

The survey was a useful tool to collect data about the use and teaching of mediation. As described in the Results section, teachers use translanguaging to facilitate communication. They also make adjustments in their communication while communicating in class when learners from different cultural backgrounds are present in class. Regarding cultural mediation, they encourage the students to work on the identification of common elements in different cultures. The learners are encouraged to explain cultural elements to someone from a different culture.

Regarding the teaching of language mediation strategy, some teachers teach them even if mediation is rarely included in the curriculum. Indeed, only one of the teachers interviewed shared her/his experience in teaching mediation. According to her/him, time is sometimes too scarce to include mediation strategies in the class program. Usually, it is included in speaking classes, in particular for role-play activities. The teacher helps the students with difficulties in the use of vocabulary. For example, the substitution of specific words with hypernyms and the practice of paraphrasing are introduced to the learners in order to help them to explain a concept for which they do not know the exact equivalent in their language.

It is worth noticing that mediation strategies are rarely taught and not always included in the curriculum. This reflects the consideration made in Nadales and Valderrama's study (2020), namely that teachers do not feel confident and sufficiently trained to fully include mediation in the language

curriculum. Indeed, in the current research, teachers proved to rarely use and teach some mediation strategies and in a very limited variety. Indeed, they only teach the students how to adapt language. This strategy is labelled in the CV as a strategy to mediate communication (Figure 1). Nevertheless, the other four strategies listed in the CV (i.e. linking to previous knowledge; breaking down complicated information; amplifying a dense text and streamlining a text) are not taught in class. Furthermore, they only consider a specific kind of activity (role-plays), that, in accordance with the three macro categories of activities listed in the CV, can be considered as a “mediating a text” activity. The importance of mediation in team working and in pluricultural contexts is not taken into account by teachers. These aspects are quite relevant, since the CV focuses on it, by listing various mediation activities related to group collaboration (i.e. collaborating in a group; facilitating collaborative interaction with peers; collaborating to construct meaning; leading group work; managing interaction; encouraging conceptual talk) and to pluricultural space (i.e. facilitating pluricultural space; acting as intermediary in informal situations; facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements) as can be noticed in Figure 1.

5. *Conclusion*

The present paper aimed to investigate teachers' attitude towards mediation in language classes in Spain and to study the usage/teaching of mediation in class. The study was conducted through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The results of this analysis lead to the following conclusions: teachers generally have a positive attitude towards mediation, they use it in class (through the use of translanguaging and visual supports), but they rarely include the teaching of mediation strategies in the curriculum.

Firstly, the analysis of the survey results reveals that teachers' attitude towards mediation is generally positive and that they sometimes use mediation strategies in class. Considering the answers given during the interviews, it is possible to find out that teachers often do not plan the use of them. Nevertheless, when necessary they use some of them—namely non-verbal support, translanguaging, comparison of languages—in order to facilitate teacher-student communication and student-student communication.

Additionally, the analysis of the interview confirms that teachers do not fully include the teaching of mediation strategies in their lessons, probably because of the scarce training received, as already studied by Nadales and Valderrama (2020). Even though they use some of these strategies, they

explicitly teach how to use them (paraphrasing and the use of hypernyms) only on some rare occasions and in some specific kinds of courses (speaking courses). As previously stated, teachers focus only on adapting language in role-plays, and do not include in their classes other mediation activities and strategies listed in the CV. In particular, they do not consider group working and pluricultural space, important elements related to mediation.

The results of the present study can find pedagogical applications in teacher training. The main aim of the *TEMPLATE* project is to provide effective training on plurilingualism and technology in language teaching, and mediation strategies and activities are an essential part of it, as it is meant to help teachers to implement European recommendations about language teaching and learning. Since mediation is an important element present in the CV (2018), it can be included in the training modules of *TEMPLATE*. The results obtained through the analysis of the questionnaire and of the Spanish focus group can be taken into account for the definition of these modules.

As with all empirical research, the present study has some limitations and provides suggestions for research to be undertaken in the future. As far as limitations are concerned, the number of participants is limited, and only the answers to the Spanish focus group were considered. Moreover, the teachers took part in the questionnaire and in the interview on a voluntary basis. Therefore, they represent a small biased group of participants, keen to learn and to improve and update their teaching methods. In addition, the participants were mainly experienced teachers. Indeed, almost 50% were between 41 and 50 years old and most of them were in-service language teachers.

Furthermore, since this research could be one of the few studies investigating teachers' attitude towards mediation, several further studies can be carried out to complement it. For instance, a broader research can be conducted, by generally considering the overall results obtained in the survey and interviews, and comparing them with the Spanish situation. Besides, it would be also interesting to compare these results with those obtained when asking younger in-service and pre-service teachers, in order to investigate the teachers' attitude considering the differences between experienced teachers and inexperienced ones. Moreover, it could be possible to study the teaching of mediation in a plurilingual context, namely a specific context in which the use of mediation is particularly relevant. Finally, as previously stated, the realisation of some teacher training about mediation can be carried out.

In conclusion, despite the limitations, the findings of the study reported in the present paper are relevant to outline teachers' attitude about mediation and they provide significant elements for further research as well.

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- d. *citazioni*: oltre le tre righe di testo, comporre un paragrafo a sé, col margine sinistro rientrato di almeno un centimetro e senza virgolette iniziali e finali, corpo 11;
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- se ci sono le pagine, due punti dopo l'anno e poi uno spazio (**Rossi 1998: 134-135**);
- se si citano più opere, dello stesso autore o di autori diversi, separare ogni riferimento con un punto e virgola: es. (**Rossi 1993; 1994; Bianchi 1999; 2009**).
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