



MEDIATION TECHNIQUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH ORAL COMPETENCE

**TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER. MÁSTER EN
LINGÜÍSTICA INGLESA APLICADA**

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Convocatoria febrero 2022. Curso académico 2021-2022.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The assessment of the speaking skills of a foreign language is one of the most discussed areas in Applied Linguistics. More specifically, in the field of teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL, henceforth), it has been a topic of research for decades. In the eighties, Canale (1984) already pointed out the challenges of assessing language within the so-called Communicative Approach¹, that is, language testing had to face new assessment formats in order to allow creative and open-ended language use, as well as new testing and scoring procedures.

As Backlund, Brown, Gurry, and Jandt (1980) formerly stated, determining competence in oral communication is a complex task. Speaking competence implies several factors such as the purpose involved, the speaker's language profile (for instance, linguistic background knowledge, language maturity, among others), previous knowledge of the topic that is being discussed, and the combination of fluency and accuracy.

Although much research has been done in this area, how speaking skills are assessed is still a matter of concern for both linguists and educators. For instance, Roca Varela and Palacios (2013) studied some of the current best-known English proficiency tests (Cambridge, International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Trinity College), with a special focus on the oral components of these exams. Given that oral production is the most complex ability to test, these authors analysed the criteria used in these tests, as well as their relationship with the guidelines given by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR is an

¹ The Communicative Approach is a methodology developed in the 1980s for second and foreign language teaching. It focuses on the communicative functions that learners can perform. It refers to the actual use of the language (e.g., production of speech) rather than the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary (Canale and Swain, 1980).

international framework for language learning, teaching, and assessment, which provides descriptions of what people can do in a language, at different proficiency levels.

Developed by the Council of Europe, the CEFRL was first introduced in 2001. A new edition of this document was presented in 2018, and it was referred to as the CEFRL Companion Volume with New Descriptors. This new version represented a significant development from the communicative point of view and examined issues beyond the traditional four skills (that is, spoken and written reception and production). Thus, it also included interaction and mediation (Piccardo, North, and Goodier, 2019). This model of language use has had an impact on teaching and testing because it provides a common basis for courses, syllabi and qualifications in European educational systems. The CEFRL intends to provide modern language professionals (that is, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies and administrators) with a coordinated view on the description of contents and methods in order to meet the learners' needs.

In the 2001 CEFRL edition, the notion of mediation was introduced (Creanga, 2020). Nevertheless, it was not until the 2018 edition when the concept was developed and introduced as an additional element in communication, namely, mediation as the construction of new meaning (Piccardo, North, and Goodier, 2019). Mediation is an intricate language activity that involves reception, production and interaction. It is an attribute of communication in which the language learner "creates bridges and helps construct and convey meaning" (CEFRL Companion Volume, 2020: 90). This building of communication bridges can take place in a social, cultural, linguistic, professional, or pedagogical and learning context, as will be examined in the present study.

Considering the properties that underlie mediation, as discussed above, this study addresses the role of mediation in the teaching of English as a second language, and how the use of this modern approach can foster the perception of learning and have a positive impact on the learners' oral production. Therefore, the aim of this study is twofold: (a) to investigate how the concept of linguistic mediation can be put into practice

in the language teaching classroom by means of a mediation speaking task, and (b) to examine the learners' attitude and perception towards the linguistic mediation activity.

In order to analyse these two objectives, the participants were asked to complete two different speaking activities: a standard – or more traditional- interaction activity, in which students, in pairs, talked to each other to build a conversation based on some visual material, and a mediation activity, which consisted of producing an oral text based on a written text.

After each activity, the participants filled in a questionnaire so as to examine their perceptions on how the activity had helped their learning, and how it had contributed to their fluency and oral competence. In this respect, this study seeks to answer whether the implementation of a mediation activity exhibits significant differences when compared to a more standard speaking activity.

Secondly, given the importance of mediation in the CEFRL, it also seems relevant to investigate whether satisfaction towards the realisation of a mediation activity is in line with the learners' assessment performance.

Students were assessed on different aspects such as clarity and distinctness of speech, range or grammar accuracy, based on a set of rubrics created for this study. Further information on this matter will be discussed in section 4, where we will discuss the methodology applied in this work.

All in all, the present work examines whether there is a correlation between a student's perception towards learning and the mark obtained after the administration of a mediation activity. It also investigates whether positive perception towards the learning activity is related to a better performance, and therefore it will turn out to have an impact on higher marks.

This study is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a literature review on the concept of mediation in second language learning and assessment of the speaking

competence. Section 3 proposes the research questions of this study, and Section 4 explains how the study was carried out. The results will be presented in Section 5 and discussed in Section 6. Conclusions and lines for further work will be addressed in Section 7.

2. MEDIATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

As discussed in the previous section, it was already in the eighties when the concept of communication started to be present in research (for instance, Backlund, Brown, Gurry, and Jandt, 1980). In particular, the different skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) were argued to be interrelated and essential in determining the communication competence.

Backlund et al. (1980) stated that determining competence in oral communication is complex because it depends on the interaction of several communication skills. For example, the capability of understanding written material through reading could contribute to a major development of oral skills. However, the interrelatedness among the different communicative skills had to be treated with caution, especially when designing instruments to assess the learner's communicative ability.

As the understanding of the complexity of communicative competence became accepted, so did the concern for a reliable assessment of the oral proficiency, and the equal concern to develop reliable tests (Canale and Swain 1980). Therefore, different ways of assessing competence in a second language were gradually implemented. By way of example, role-play has been used as a method for the assessment of speaking and pragmatic competence because it can integrate different skills. Indeed, role-play has been defined as “a complete range of communication technique which develops language fluency and promotes student interaction during the class, increasing students' motivation and encouraging their learning” (Kusnierek, 2015: 7). Furthermore, role-play

allows to accommodate the needs for authenticity and the correspondence to real-life interaction (Kasper and Youn, 2018). This applies especially in the evaluation of EFL, since it allows learners to develop conversational skills in a collaborative way.

The assessment of language skills in an act of communication where the test simulates real world behaviour is a widespread testing methodology (McNamara, 2000). Many well-known English proficiency tests include collaborative and interactional test tasks in simulated real-life scenarios. For example, the Cambridge Examinations of English for Speakers of Other Languages (Cambridge ESOL) include playacted situations in which learners interact with each other, after being given a visual stimulus discussion.

Accomplishing a shared goal is a very effective approach in second language teaching and learning environments since it is the foundation of the cooperative learning principle (Zhang, 2010). The positive impact of cooperative learning has been confirmed with regards to second language learners (Dörnyei, 1997). Thus, it seems crucial to consider that this principle might be transferred to testing communicative competence. We assume that cooperation, collaboration and interaction are closely bound to the social trait of language learning, in general, and EFL, in particular (Oxford & Nyikos, 1997). The social dimension of language communicative activities was taken into consideration through the introduction of the concept of mediation in the CEFRL.

Mediation covers several spheres such as cultural, social, linguistic or pedagogical. Considering that mediation focuses on facilitating understanding, the cultural sphere is unavoidable given that it involves preserving and passing the essential meaning of the source. There are many theoretical studies that have covered the subject of cultural mediation in the teaching of modern languages (Brown, 2007; Byram, 2008; Levy and Zarate, 2003; Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier and Penz, 2003).

Regarding the social sphere, mediation contributes to help in communication, not only because there could be misunderstandings in speech interactions, but also because it combines different factors such as diverse perspectives, or lack of knowledge. Social mediation also entails bringing new partners together, acting in situations of conflict, and it can be considered as an alternative to linguistic and cultural confrontation (Zarate, 2003).

In relation to the linguistic sphere, mediation encompasses an interlinguistic and an intralinguistic dimension. It addresses the field of translation and interpretation, as well as transforming one text type or genre into another type in the same language (North and Piccardo, 2016).

With regards to the pedagogical sphere, mediation implies facilitating access to knowledge, co-constructing meaning collaboratively, and facilitating the conditions for this to happen (North and Piccardo, 2016).

The concept of mediation, therefore, leads to a wide range of interpretations. Some of them are “arbitrary” (Blini, 2008). Nonetheless, it is the linguistic mediation what is in question in this work since it has been argued to be an ambiguous term (Blini, 2009). Such an ambiguity lies in the fact that the notion of mediation had been previously used in different disciplines (for example, psychology, pedagogy, and social sciences) and led to the development of various connotations.

Prior to the CEFRL, mediation had already been investigated in the field of Applied Linguistics; however, it had a meaning that was different to the one that was later adopted in the CEFRL (being mediation a social dimension that is mainly about facilitating communication. We will develop the concept later). For instance, Donato and MacCormick (1994) discussed the concept of mediation from a Vygotskian point of view, that is, how learners could use different tools to mediate between their minds and their world in order to construct meaning via the teacher’s assistance, or using peers as

mediators. Nevertheless, despite this conceptual difference, the notion of constructing meaning based on social interaction is intrinsically connected with the more recent introduction of mediation and interaction in the CEFRL. In the field of second language teaching and learning, the necessity to interact with others is undeniable when acquiring a second language (Guerrero Nieto, 2007).

Mediation is defined as a language activity in which “the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, [...] sometimes from one language to another” (Council of Europe, 2020: 90). As we stated before, the CEFRL introduced interaction and mediation as new dimensions in communicative language activities. More specifically, mediation “recognizes the unique role of the social dimension in language.... the co-construction of meaning” and strengthens the social dimension of the user or language learner as a “social agent” (North and Piccardo, 2016: 9). In other words, according to Cantero and De Arriba (2003), mediation denotes transmitting selective content and adapting this content to the interlocutor’s needs and interests.

Mediation also aims to help solve communication problems (McMillan, 2019). In order to achieve this, mediation can be carried out between two different languages – also known as interlinguistic mediation-, for example, between a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) in an ESL classroom. Furthermore, it can occur within the same language – also referred to as intralinguistic mediation-, for instance, from English to English.

The CEFRL presents different types of mediation activities. Within the category of oral mediation, some examples involve simultaneous interpretation (for instance, conferences, meetings, or formal speeches), consecutive interpretation such as welcome speeches or guided tours, and informal interpretation of foreign visitors in own country, native speakers when they live abroad, in social and transactional situations for

friends, family, clients, or foreign guests along with the interpretation of signs, menus, or notices.

Regarding the category of written mediation, some examples are listed as follows: exact translation (e.g., contracts, legal and scientific texts, among others), literary translation (novels, drama, or poetry), summarising gist (for instance, newspaper and magazine articles) in an L2 or between an L1 and an L2 and paraphrasing specialised texts. In addition to these activities, it is stated that “there are many activities in which the user/learner is required to produce a textual response to a textual stimulus. The textual stimulus may be an oral question, a set of written instructions, a discursive text, authentic or composed, etc. or some combination of these. The required textual response may be anything from a single word to a three-hour essay. Both input and output texts may be spoken or written and in L1 or L2” (CEFRL; section 4.6.3: 99).

The 2001 edition of the CEFRL offered a relevant position to the role of mediation, and it confirmed that mediation is an everyday activity that makes communication possible between people that, for whatever reason, are not able to understand each other without the integrating role of a mediating language activity. Despite the relevance given to the document, the concept was not greatly developed (North and Piccardo, 2016). However, the 2018 Companion Volume with New Descriptors brought significant improvements and a broader conceptualisation, together with the introduction of macro-categories and the development of descriptors. The scales for mediation were then presented in three groups, as discussed in the following lines, reflecting the way in which mediation tends to occur:

- Group 1 - Mediating a text: relaying specific information – in speech and in writing; explaining data – in speech and in writing; processing text - in speech and in writing; translating a written text - in speech and in writing; note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.); expressing a personal response

to creative texts (including literature), analysing creative texts (including literature).

- Group 2 - Mediating concepts: collaborating in a group (facilitating interaction with peers, collaborating to construct meaning); leading group work (managing interaction, encouraging conceptual talk).

- Group 3 - Mediating communication: facilitating pluricultural space; acting as an intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues); facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements.

The CEFRL has proven to play a significant role for professionals in the field of modern languages (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2019b). One of the main principles of the CEFRL is that the member states, when adopting and developing national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching, achieve greater convergence at the European level by means of appropriate arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination of policies. In this sense, the CEFRL is a compulsory authority given that it provides a shared ground for the elaboration of language syllabi and curricula, textbooks, and assessment criteria. Taking the weight of the CEFRL into consideration, and the relevance given to mediation in the 2018 version of the CEFRL, it seems critical to consider that there must be some transference of the mediation strategy into the EFL classroom.

In the EFL classroom, mediation activities can enrich the learners' experience since they can foster engagement, creativity, and contribute to meaningful collaborative tasks (Goodier, 2019). Additionally, mediation develops a combination of receptive, productive and interactive skills, as well as other skills that involve the ability to reach agreement, which are essential life skills (McMillan, 2019). Thus, although the integration of skills lies in the core of mediation, it also adds complexity when it comes to putting mediation into practice within the language learning context. Mediation has been said to

require an overall competence, built-up from a number of sub-competences such as linguistic competence and interpersonal competence (Howell, 2017).

Creanga (2020: 84) affirms that “emotional intelligence is a necessary asset for a person involved in mediation activities”. This is the case since empathy is a key element in communicative situations. Therefore, the intricacy of transferring all the above into a classroom environment is a challenging task. Despite the exhaustive theoretical coverage of the concept of mediation, it is difficult to find academic studies that examine whether mediation has a positive impact (or lack thereof) on learners’ oral production (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2019b). The relative newness of the whole concept of linguistic mediation could explain the low bulk of empirical studies that go beyond the conceptualisation of this strategy. Thus, the actual implementation of mediation techniques in the classroom is presumably yet to be tested. Despite this, there have been some recent attempts to set up mediation activities in an EFL setting, and to identify any possible connections between these activities and the students’ communicative competence. Alcaraz-Mármol (2019b) conducted a study among Spanish A-level students to shed light on whether their oral communicative skills would improve after the completion of a set of linguistic mediation activities. The 40 participants who took part in the study were considered to have an Intermediate level in English. During six weeks, they put in practice their speaking skills along six speaking sessions by means of interlinguistic mediation activities. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the study, the participants took a speaking test, and after the six mediation sessions, students took another test with different questions but with the same level of difficulty. Results showed that the implementation of mediation activities had a positive effect in the development of oral production. Although the overall speaking results did not show significant differences, the students’ performance was also analysed in each individual item via an assessment rubric. Different variables were examined in this respect, namely, coherence and cohesion, variety and precision, fluency, interaction and pronunciation. Results

confirmed that fluency and interaction improved communicative competence. The intervention confirmed the findings reported by previous studies that linked linguistic mediation to interaction and fluency (Douglas, 1997, Lennon, 1990, Richards, 2007). Alcaraz-Mármol (2019b) concluded that the results suggested that more importance should be given to mediation in the context of teaching and learning.

Another research project was carried out among Spanish A-level students with the goal of analysing what the students' attitudes were towards the execution of linguistic mediation activities in the classroom (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2019a). A group of 88 A-level students completed three activities on linguistic mediation, two of them were interlinguistic and one of them was intralinguistic. After that, they filled in a questionnaire to provide the researchers with feedback on the following aspects: how useful they had found the activities in terms of language learning, how comfortable and confident they had felt during the realisation of the activities, how useful they thought the activities were for real life, and finally whether they considered that some previous training would have been necessary to carry out the activities effectively. In this case, results were not consistent because there was a disparity of opinions towards the usefulness of the activities in real life, as well as some disparity regarding how confident the participants had felt with the realisation of these activities, regardless of their English language proficiency. There was a general agreement in the sense that some specific training might have been useful prior to the realisation of the activities. The findings suggested that a progressive implementation of mediation tasks should take place in the EFL classroom to achieve an integral development of the communicative competence.

This study sheds some light on how the learners' perception of a certain activity may be connected to real and effective learning. There are some studies that connect perception with competent learning. Donald Kirkpatrick developed in the fifties a four-level model for evaluating training programs (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006). The model was originally designed for on-the-job training rather than for classroom

instruction, but it has become a methodology that can be applied to many learning programs. The first level of the model is the “reaction”, which measures the degree to which participants find the training favourable and engaging. The second level is the “learning”, a dimension that evaluates the learning of each participant through pre- and post-assessments on the learners’ knowledge, skills, attitude, and confidence. The third step is the “behaviour”, which measures whether the participants really processed the learning and, therefore, can apply what they learnt (this is done assessing certain skills in the workplace, by means of a defined scoring process that is designed in advance). And the fourth and last step is the “results”, a level which is dedicated to measure direct results, using a set of key performance indicators. There are many studies that prove the usefulness of this model for evaluating training outcomes (e.g., Smidt, Balandin, Sigafos, and Reed, 2009). Even though the model, as we stated before, was not originally meant to measure the outcome of learning programmes in a classroom, even less so in an EFL environment, it might be interesting to consider that taking this model into consideration could validate the implementation of mediation techniques in an EFL classroom. The two first steps of the model, the reaction and the learning, establish a positive relation between the participants’ perception towards the training activity and the actual learning, being the latter higher when the reaction is higher, too. This model has been proved to be effective in different fields, such as Health Information Management courses (Rouse, 2011), in the hospitality industry (Chang, 2010), training programs for head teachers (Alsalamah and Callinan, 2021), and university contexts (Farjad, 2012). There are many authors that have adapted this model to be used in academic contexts and different educational settings (Praslova, 2010, Cahapay, 2021), which shows the potential use of the model in this area. This versatility may lead us to consider that the model can be generalized and applied to second language teaching and learning contexts, too.

A different study was carried out in an English course for students of Sociological Science at the University of Padua, Italy (Richieri, 2021). The objective was to exemplify the implementation of mediation assignments in an English course, and therefore to understand the concept and then develop attitudes and strategies which can benefit the user/learner of a language in a globalized context. The study integrated language learning and mediation skills development. The participants carried out different tasks that addressed different ways in which mediation usually occurs, namely, the teacher presented some previously selected resources, and the presentation was followed by a task which consisted of the elaboration of a two-minute message related to different issues. The participants were asked to use the grammar points and the vocabulary previously learned and/or revised in the lesson plan. The messages had to be uploaded in the Moodle platform so that it could be later discussed in groups (in Zoom breakout rooms) during the following lesson. Along with the reinforcement of the second language skills, interactive communication style was also analysed, namely, giving an opinion briefly, checking the interlocutor's understanding, giving feedback to the interlocutor, avoiding prompt disagreements, and focusing on areas of agreement. The students reflected on and evaluated their own attitudes, behaviours, and language development. At the end of the course, some of the participants completed a survey (around 118 students took the course, but only 30 of them answered the survey). Data from the survey led to assume that lessons devoted to mediation in communication provided changes in learners' beliefs, behaviours, and everyday communication. However, the study does not examine how mediation tasks respond to EFL. In fact, although the data collected are argued to be related to students' perceptions, the findings do not go hand in hand with students' performance. Despite this limitation, the findings revealed the need to become familiar with the new conceptualization of communicative competence as defined in the CEFRL.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering that the CEFRL regards mediation as an essential part of communicative competence, the present study investigates how the concept of linguistic mediation can be put into practice in the English language teaching classroom. It also examines the English language learners' attitudes and learning perceptions towards a linguistic mediation activity, and whether this perception might be linked to learners' performance.

With regards to our first objective, we formulated the following research question (RQ, henceforth):

RQ1. Can we put mediation into practice and implement a mediation activity in an ESL classroom?

Based on this research question, we predict that, despite the relative novelty of the concept, it is feasible to carry out mediation activities in an EFL environment. The studies conducted by Alcaraz-Mármol (2019a and 2019b), and Richieri (2021) lead us to predict that mediation language activities can be produced for the foreign language classroom. Mansur and Chiappini (2020) offer practical advice on how to create this type of activities.

It also seems relevant to study the students' attitude towards this type of tasks, as well as how students approach mediation. Following the results reported by Richieri (2021) study, we predict that participants are likely to perceive mediation activities positively.

With regards to perception of mediation activities, we formulate the following RQ:

RQ2. Do mediation activities have a positive impact on ESL learners' perception in their oral performance?

In order to provide an answer to RQ 2, we compared the participants' perception of a standard speaking activity to their perception after having carried out a mediation speaking activity (see section 4.2.2). Based on the findings reported by previous studies, a correlation between the participant's perception of the mediation activity and their performance are likely to be expected. Richieri's (2021) study attested that implementing mediation strategies in the EFL classroom had a positive impact on communication competence, as perceived by the learners. On the other hand, according to Kirkpatrick's model (2006), the students' thoughts and perceptions of the learning experience could enhance the students' resulting learning, which would be reflected in the mark obtained in the task assessment. As discussed in the second section of this work, the evaluation of oral competence has traditionally been a challenging issue for linguists and researchers. Given the crucial position of mediation in the CEFRL, it also seems relevant to investigate whether a higher result in terms of satisfaction is in line with a higher mark in the evaluation of that activity, and therefore contributing to the improvement in the development of oral production. This area of research leads to the following RQ3, formulated below:

RQ3: Does a better perception of the activity carried out contribute to the improvement in the development of English oral competence?

Alcaraz-Mármol (2019b) observed that mediation contributes to the development in oral production. More specifically, the study showed that fluency and interaction improved significantly after the implementation of mediation activities. In this regard, it is pertinent to study to which extent this improvement might be effective on the acquisition of oral proficiency in English as a second language.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study consisted of 11 undergraduate university students (9 males and two females). Their ages ranged from 20 to 24. Their L1 was Spanish. The students were enrolled in an intensive course in general B1 English to be issued an official certificate that proved their language competence. Such a qualification was a language requirement of the university degrees in which they were enrolled. The course was part of the AULAS (Alicante University Language Services) program. AULAS is a language school located in the *Centro Superior de Idiomas*, an institution that belongs to the University of Alicante. AULAS offers language courses to students, university staff, and public in general. The participants had been assigned to this level after having taken a written and oral placement test. The written test is available in the institution's website and was taken online: <https://web.csidiomas.ua.es/tests/mostrar-seccion-test4.asp>. Each student was placed in their corresponding proficiency level, which was confirmed via an online interview with an AULAS teacher.

Although there were 12 students taking the intensive General English B1 course, one of them missed the class the day on which the tasks for this study were delivered. Prior to this day, they had followed eleven classes (4 hours each class), where they could practice speaking skills, as well as grammar, listening, reading and writing.

4.2. TASKS AND PROCEDURE

The procedure used to carry out this study involved the administration of two different speaking tasks, and a post-task questionnaire which enabled the participants to give feedback on aspects related to the general satisfaction and perceptions developed with regards to the learning outcomes in each activity. The tasks and the questionnaires were carried out before the final exam.

Prior to the delivery of the tasks and the questionnaire, ethical clearance was granted. The participants were given an informed consent form, which they signed and handed in to the teacher (see Appendix 1).

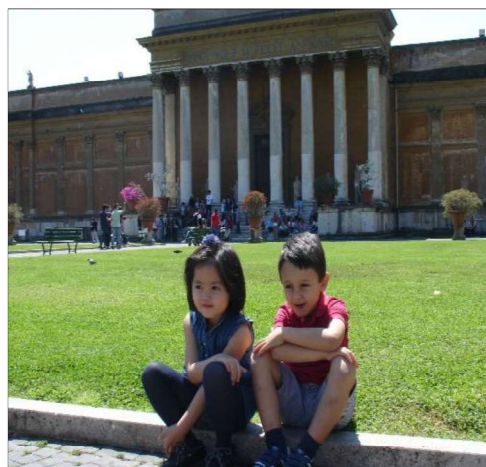
Both tasks were meant to provide with clear instructions, be manageable, feasible, and easy to be conducted in a regular class using simple equipment.

4.2.1. TASK 1: STANDARD SPEAKING ACTIVITY

Task 1 (Appendix 2) involved the completion of an interactive activity in which the learners, who had been previously grouped in pairs (four pairs and one group of three students), had to speak freely for about 3 or 4 minutes on a given topic. The topics were selected according to the B1 level course. The participants were shown four photographs that showed two children each, acting out in four different situations. The photographs were displayed on a classroom projection screen.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the pictures displayed two children, a boy and a girl, in four different contexts: for example, the two children were watching some ducks swimming in a river, they are seen next to two little ponies, they are sitting on the pavement, or they are playing with an assembling toy. The pictures used in this activity were taken by the author of this work.

Figure 1. Task 1 Photographs



Prior to the execution of the task, the participants were given the following instructions orally, that is, the teacher read the instructions aloud to the students:

“I would like you to talk about what the children seem to be doing, where you think they are, and how you think they are feeling.

Choose the picture in which, in your opinion, the children are enjoying the most”.

A two-way discussion took place for the indicated length of time, approximately 4 minutes. The students were required to negotiate and reach a final agreement. Some

follow-up questions such as *what was your favourite game / activity when you were a child? what is your earliest memory? do you think it is important for children to be in touch with nature/animals?* were asked randomly. They were able to give spontaneous answers to these open questions. The teacher took some notes of their interaction, but there was no formal record of their oral production since the task was not intended to be graded.

This type of task is similar to some standard activities in several official examinations (e.g., Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET), B1 Exam of the Association of Language Centres in Higher Education (B1 CertACLES).

The participants were also asked to fill out a questionnaire that examined the students' perception of the activity. The questionnaire and its structure will be presented and explained in section 4.2.3.

4.2.2. TASK 2: MEDIATION SPEAKING ACTIVITY

This task was designed to meet the criteria established by the CEFRL regarding some mediation activities:

“There are many activities in which the user/learner is required to produce a textual response to a textual stimulus. The textual stimulus may be an oral question, a set of written instructions (e.g., an examination rubric), a discursive text, authentic or composed, etc. or some combination of these. The required textual response may be anything from a single word to a three-hour essay. Both input and output texts may be spoken or written and in L1 or L2”.

(Council of Europe, 2001. Section 4.6.3: 99).

An intralinguistic mediation activity was elaborated so that the students could have the opportunity to restate a written source text and generate a new text to be produced orally.

Task 2 involved a role-play situation in which the students, grouped in pairs (four pairs and one group of three students), received a written text each. In this case, the activity was printed, and each student received a paper copy of the instructions and the text. The entire activity is included in Appendix 3. To set an example, one of the two texts given to the students is shown below:

There are dozens of excellent places to eat in Alicante and not all of them serve rice and fish dishes as their speciality.

Alicante is a very cosmopolitan city, which welcomes visitors from all over the world. This means that you can find an incredibly varied range of places for dining out. From Alicante's traditional food to gourmet cuisine, there are many restaurants with affordable prices and the most original options.

If you are looking for a good area for eating out in Alicante, the best place is the area around El Postiguet Beach, the Explanada and the Cathedral. This area, which you could call the historic quarter of Alicante, is home to the largest concentration of bars and restaurants where you can partake in the tradition of going *tapas bar hopping* (or enjoying a pre-meal drink and bite), as well as have lunch or dinner before whiling away your afternoon or evening. What's more, in some cases they come included with spectacular views of the Mediterranean.

One of the best options if you want to eat well and on a budget in Alicante is the Central Market, where several stands have bars where you can sample the finest local produce. However, for a more comfortable lunch or dinner, it's worth getting a table at one of the places in the area. You will be able to find vegetarian and vegan restaurants, as well as tasty food from southern Italy with countless creative touches. Also, you can go for classic restaurants serving home-cooked food. Price is of course important, and in many of the restaurants, you will be able to choose between a 10-euro set menu or just order straight off the menu.

We are looking forward to welcoming you in Alicante!

The participants were later asked to produce a related text to be addressed orally to a hypothetical foreign friend who was coming to visit soon. The activity was intended to imitate a real-life situation, since this imitation would ease the use of the target language (that is, English).

Each student had to mediate one of the texts, and pass the mediated text on to their partner, who had no access to the original source text. The activity focused on processing a text and presenting the information to the recipient. Some basic advice was given, and students were given five minutes to prepare their one-minute presentation. Partners were allowed to ask questions, which led to some spontaneous oral interaction.

Once preparation time was over, the teacher listened to each pair of students, and took notes on how they delivered the mediated message. Students were graded in their performance, in accordance with a scoring guide that was created for this study taking the CEFRL guidelines into consideration. As illustrated in Figure 2, rubrics were designed considering the following factors: (a) grammar, (b) vocabulary, (c) discourse management, (d) interactive communication, and (e) overall performance.

For each factor, a brief description of the skills and knowledge expected for each level of mastery were given and rated based on a scale ranging from 1 (weakest performance) to 5 (strongest performance).

Assessment was based on students' grammar accuracy, their choice of words, their linguistic performance, their organisation of ideas, and their clarity of speech.

Figure 2. Assessment rubric

BAND/SCORE	GRAMMAR	VOCABULARY	DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT	INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	OVERALL PERFORMANCE
5	Good control / effective use of grammatical forms, with a fairly high degree of automaticity.	Good range of vocabulary related to routine situations (family, hobbies, work, travel, current events).	Response is well-developed and coherent. Discourse is adequate, no hesitations.	Responds adequately to the other speaker. Support. Respects turn-taking in an adequate way.	Fulfills the demands of the task. It is intelligible and shows sustained discourse.
4	Features between 3 and 5				
3	Control of grammar forms in predictable situations. Minor mistakes are not impeding.	Use of appropriate vocabulary in routine tasks or situations. Errors do not impede understanding.	Can maintain a casual conversation. Some repetition is present. Can link a series of short phrases into a coherent speech.	Can keep the task going, but mainly responding to the other candidate. Sometimes needs to pause and plan / may need some prompting.	Able to maintain a conversation, although overall development is somewhat limited.
2	Features between 1 and 3				
1	Limited range and control of grammar. These limitations prevent full expression of ideas. Only basic sentence structures are used successfully.	Use of very basic vocabulary. Excessive repetition. Many responses are practiced or based on formulaic expressions.	Response addresses the task but development of the topic is limited. Responses are not always relevant. Hesitation and pauses are present. Simple or unclear connections.	Difficulties understanding the other speaker. Maintains very simple exchanges, with some difficulty. Requires support and prompting. Does not respect turn-taking / there are a lot of silences.	Little conversation. Basic repertoire of phrases. Can only use simple structures or memorized sentences.
0	No response or response unrelated to the question/topic.				

When the task was completed, the questionnaire was administered to each student and collected by the teacher after completion.

4.2.3. LEARNING PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire (Appendix 4) was distributed in class after each activity. The students filled it in and handed it back to the teacher. Questionnaires on Task 1 were collected before the delivery of Task 2.

The questionnaire was tailor-made for this study and meant to elicit the students' perception with regards to six dimensions: (a) general satisfaction with the activity, (b) motivation and expectations prior to the activity, (c) assessment of the degree to which the task facilitates learning, (d) assessment of the degree to which the delivery of the task facilitates learning, (e) contribution of the task to the improvement of language

fluency, and (f) level of transfer to real-life situations. The questionnaire was designed in Spanish, the participants' L1, in order to guarantee the students' comprehension of the items and avoid misinterpretations.

The dimensions under analysis and how they were presented are explained below. After each dimension, we have included, in brackets, the name of the variable given as to describe each dimension. The names will be used for the subsequent analysis of the data, which will be analysed in the Results section:

a) General satisfaction with the activity (*Satisf*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *not at all satisfied* (1), to *very satisfied* (4). The item for this dimension was: "*Level of general satisfaction with the activity*".

b) Motivation and expectations prior to the activity (*Motiv and exp*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *not at all motivated* (1), to *very motivated* (4). The item for this dimension was: "*Motivation and expectations prior to the realisation of the activity*".

c) Assessment of the degree to which the design of the task facilitates learning (*Design*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *does not facilitate at all* (1), to *facilitates a lot* (4). The item for this dimension was: "*Degree to which you value how the activity facilitates your general learning, as for the way it is designed*".

d) Assessment of the degree to which the delivery of the task facilitates learning (*Application*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *does not facilitate at all* (1), to *facilitates a lot* (4). The item for

this dimension was: *“Degree to which you value how the activity facilitates your general learning, as for the way it is applied”*.

e) Contribution of the task to the improvement of your fluency (*Fluency*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *no contribution at all* (1), to *large contribution* (4). The item for this dimension was: *“Contribution of the activity to the improvement of your fluency and oral production”*.

f) Level of application to real-life situations (*Transfer*). The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *no transfer at all* (1), to *large transfer* (4). The item for this dimension was: *“Degree of transfer of what you have learned to actual use of the language in real-life situations”*.

For each one of the questionnaire dimensions, an open question was asked in order to elicit qualitative aspects related to each dimension. For example: *“Which aspects could increase your level of satisfaction”*, or *“How you think you could improve the level of transfer of the activity to real-life situations”*.

Moreover, a general open question was included at the end of the questionnaire: participants were asked to comment on any significant aspects they had considered of interest regarding the aspects previously mentioned. The question read as follows: *“Please, indicate any other observation not included in any of the aspects assessed in this questionnaire”*.

Finally, students' performance on Task 2 was assessed and reflected in the variable *“Grade obtained at the end of the course”* (*Performance*) (Table 3).

The questionnaire used in this study is included in Appendix 4.

5. RESULTS

Data from the two questionnaires were analysed statistically via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 27 (SPSSv27). Besides the descriptive statistics, differences between the means in each one of the conditions (tasks) were analysed (contrast t for means of related samples). Task 1 was classified as “T - Traditional” and Task 2 was coded as “M - Mediation”. Table 1 shows the descriptive data for each of the variables in the total sample, and the differences among the means analysed in this work. Overall, values are similar in all the variables, except for *Design* which shows statistically significant differences, as evidenced by the mean values in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and differences in averages for each task/condition.

Variables	Condition	Media	Standard Deviation	t	Sig (bilateral)
1 Sastisfaction level	Traditional	3.18	0.40	.430	0.67
	Mediation	3.09	0.70		
2 Motivation and expectations	Traditional	3.09	0.70	1.00	0.34
	Mediation	2.81	0.60		
3 Design	Traditional	3.63	0.50	1.83	0.09*
	Mediation	3.18	0.75		
4 Application	Traditional	3.27	0.46	.690	0.50
	Mediation	3.09	0.70		
5 Fluency	Traditional	3.09	0.70	.363	0.72
	Mediation	3.18	0.75		
6 Transfer	Traditional	3.18	0.75	.430	0.67
	Mediation	3.27	0.64		

* = $p < .10$ ** = $p < .05$ *** = $p < .01$

Results of the *t* contrast show that there are not statistically significant differences between the following variables under the two different conditions: Satisfaction level, Motivation and Expectations, Application, Fluency, and Transfer. However, the variable 3 (that is, *Design*) reached a statistically significant level, namely, $p=.09$ (if a bilateral 90% was accepted as a criterion).

The following figures will illustrate a comparative analysis between the means for each of the six variables taking into account the two conditions under investigation.

Figure 3. Degree of satisfaction in conditions 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation)

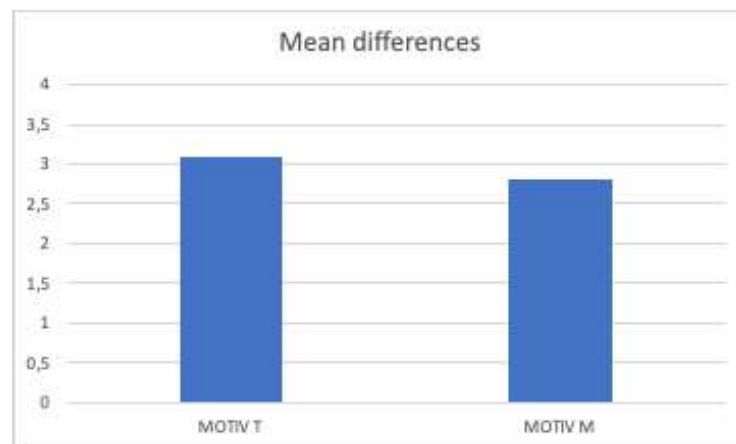


SATISF T = General Satisfaction in Traditional condition
SATISF M = General Satisfaction in Mediation condition

As depicted in Figure 3, the means obtained from the variable “General satisfaction with the activity” are very similar under both conditions, that is, Traditional (task 1) and Mediation (Task 2).

The means regarding the Motivation and Expectations prior to the realisation of the activity are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Comparison of means in condition 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation) for variable 2: Motivation and expectations.

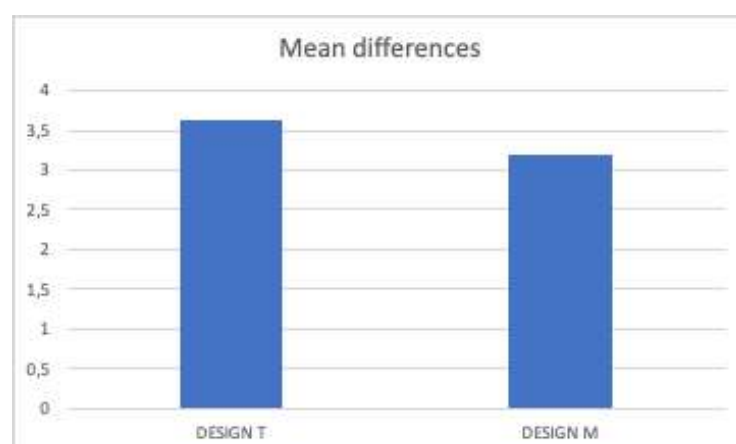


MOTIV T = Motivation in Traditional condition
MOTIV M = Motivation in Mediation condition

As depicted in Figure 4, the means regarding “Motivation and Expectations prior to the realisation of the activity” (*Motiv*) are slightly different under the two different conditions (Traditional, Task 1, and Mediation, Task 2). However, these differences are not statistically significant ($p=0.34$).

Figure 5, below, shows the means regarding the variable *Design* under the two different conditions.

Figure 5. Comparison of means in condition 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation) for variable 3: The design of the activity facilitates learning

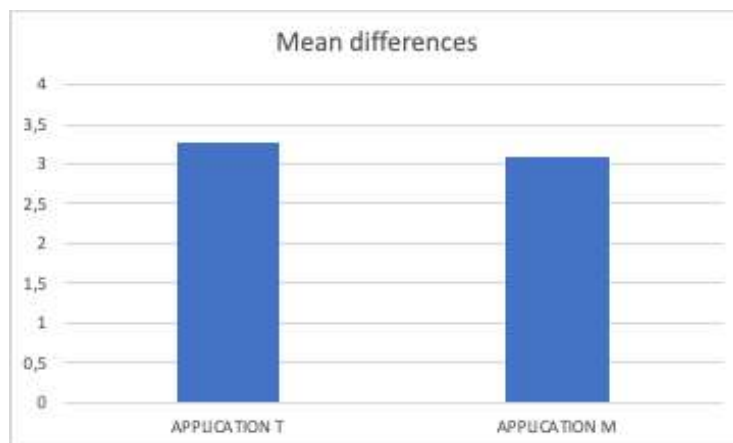


DESIGN T = Design in Traditional condition
DESIGN M = Design in Mediation condition

The variable “Assessment of the degree to which the design of the activity facilitates learning” (*Design*), is the one that shows larger differences, as evidenced by the mean scores. These differences have proven to be statistically significant ($p < .10$). In any case, this is the only variable in which differences between the two conditions are observed. This indicates that the design was allocated lower relevance in the mediation activity when compared to the traditional one. This will be later discussed in the next section.

The means obtained for the variable “Assessment to the degree of which the delivery of the task facilitates learning” are also similar under the two conditions, that is, Traditional and Mediation. This is displayed in Figure 6, where the means obtained in this variable are analogous when traditional and meditation tasks are compared to one another.

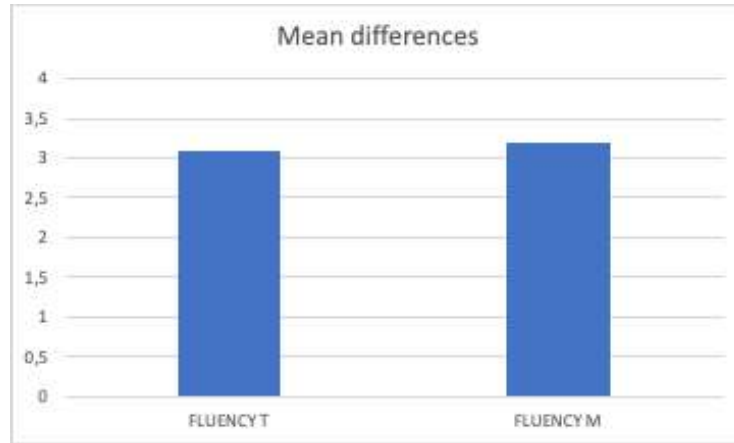
Figure 6. Comparison of means in condition 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation) for variable 4: Assessment of the degree to which the delivery of the task facilitates learning.



APPLICATION T = Application in Traditional condition
APPLICATION M= Application in Mediation condition

The means observed in the variable Fluency are depicted in Figure 7 under the two different conditions studied, Traditional and Mediation.

Figure 7. Comparison of means in condition 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation) for variable 5: Fluency



FLUENCY T = Fluency in Traditional condition
FLUENCY M = Fluency in Mediation condition

Variable 5, that is, the contribution of the activity to the improvement of the participant's fluency is one of the two variables in this study, together with the variable Transfer (shown below in Figure 8), that shows a slight inversion in the general trend. Even though differences are not statistically significant ($p=0.72$), the means is slightly higher under the condition of Mediation.

Figure 8. Comparison of means in condition 1 (Traditional) and 2 (Mediation) for variable 6: Application to real-life situations (Transfer).



TRANSFER T = Transfer in Traditional condition
TRANSFER M = Transfer in Mediation condition

As discussed earlier, the variable 6, that is, the level of application of the activity to real-life situations (Transfer), also shows a slight inversion in the general trend of the variables. In particular, as illustrated in Figure 8, a difference is seen in the means, and although this difference is not statistically significant ($p=0.67$), the mean is higher under the Mediation condition.

As shown in Table 2, all the variables involved in this study have been examined to investigate whether there is a statistically significant correlation (or lack thereof) among Satisfaction, Motivation and Expectations, Design, Application, Fluency, and Transfer. These variables have been considered under the two different conditions (Traditional and Mediation).

Table 2. Variable correlation matrix

	SATISF T	SATISF M	MOTIV T	MOTIV M	DESIGN T	DESIGN M	APPLICATION T	APPLICATION M	FLUENCY T	FLUENCY M	TRANSFER T	TRANSFER M
SATISF T	1	0,289	0,289	-0,261	0,356	-0,12	-0,289	-0,064	0,289	-0,12	0,21	0,556
SATISF M		1	0,185	0,28	,669*	,726*	-0,083	0,593	0,389	0,536	0,346	0,602
MOTIV T			1	0,043	0,386	0,156	0,222	-0,019	0,593	0,536	0,536	0,381
MOTIV M				1	0,418	0,08	-0,161	0,043	0,043	-0,141	0,301	0,14
DESIGN T					1	0,192	0,039	0,386	,669*	0,192	0,192	0,334
DESIGN M						1	0,13	0,536	0,156	,823**	0,29	0,3
APPLICACIÓN T							1	-0,083	0,528	0,415	0,13	-0,271
APPLICACIÓN M								1	0,389	0,346	0,346	0,161
FLUENCY T									1	0,346	0,536	0,161
FLUENCY M										1	0,29	0,3
TRANSFER T											1	0,506
TRANSFER M												1
* Significance at level 0,05 (bilateral).												
** Significance at level 0,01 (bilateral).												

A statistically significant association is observed between variable 3, Assessment of the degree to which the design of the activity facilitates learning (*Design*) and variable 5, Contribution of the task to the improvement of your fluency (*Fluency*). Indeed, it shows a higher significance at 95% ($r=0.669^*$) in the traditional activity. The same relation is observed in the mediation activity, with a higher association, as evidenced by its correlation coefficient ($r=0.823^{**}$).

Another relation emerges between variable 3, Assessment of the degree to which the design of the activity facilitates learning (*Design*), and variable 1, General satisfaction with the activity (*Satisf*), ($r=0,726^*$). This only occurs in the condition of mediation (in green). This association suggests that the variable “*Design*” involves the highest degree of statistical correlation in the evaluation of a task.

Since this association only occurs in the mediation condition, we will focus on analysing this correlation in relation to an additional variable, namely, the mark obtained in the task (*Performance*). This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Variable correlation matrix with the variable Performance

	SATISF T	SATISF M	MOTIV T	MOTIV M	DESIGN T	DESIGN M	APPLICACIÓN T	APPLICACIÓN M	FLUENCY T	FLUENCY M	TRANSFER T	TRANSFER M	PERFORMANCE
SATISF T	1	0,289	0,289	-0,261	0,356	-0,12	-0,289	-0,064	0,289	-0,12	0,21	0,556	0,164
SATISF M		1	0,185	0,28	,669*	,726*	-0,083	0,593	0,389	0,536	0,346	0,602	0,502*
MOTIV T			1	0,043	0,386	0,156	0,222	-0,019	0,593	0,536	0,536	0,381	0,502
MOTIV M				1	0,418	0,08	-0,161	0,043	0,043	-0,141	0,301	0,14	-0,034
DESIGN T					1	0,192	0,039	0,386	,669*	0,192	0,192	0,334	0,369
DESIGN M						1	0,13	0,536	0,156	,823**	0,29	0,3	0,513
APPLICACIÓN T							1	-0,083	0,528	0,415	0,13	-0,271	,700*
APPLICACIÓN M								1	0,389	0,346	0,346	0,161	0,242
FLUENCY T									1	0,346	0,536	0,161	,698*
FLUENCY M										1	0,29	0,3	,695*
TRANSFER T											1	0,506	0,574
TRANSFER M												1	0,436
PERFORMANCE													1

* Significance at level 0,05 (bilateral).
** Significance at level 0,01 (bilateral).

Table 3 examines the correlation coefficients among the different variables, namely, Satisfaction, Motivation, Design, Application, Fluency, and Transfer, under the Traditional and Mediation conditions. A new variable that had not been included in the previous analyses was also considered, namely, the mark obtained in the mediation task, which we have classified as “*Performance*”. Possible interpretations of these data will be discussed in the next section.

The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4 to establish the relationship between the Performance as the dependent variable, and the rest of the

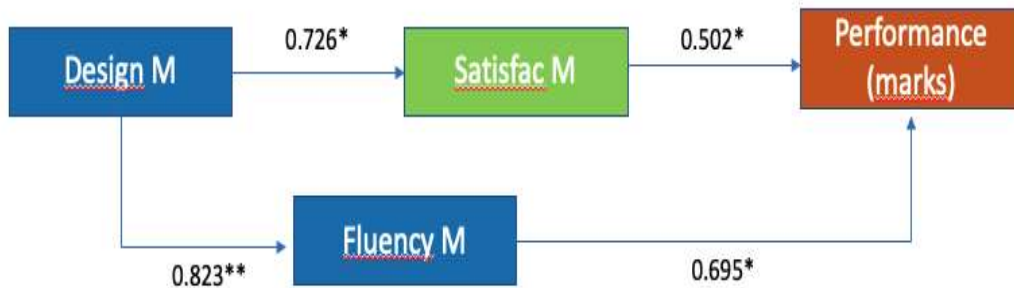
variables studied as predictors (Satisfaction, Motivation, Design, Application, Fluency, and Transfer).

Table 4. Regression analysis

Regression analysis						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	Desv. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2,903	1,143		2,541	0,032
	FLUENCY M	1,016	0,35	0,695	2,9	0,018
a Dependent variable: PERFORMANCE						

The regression analysis shows that variable 5, the Contribution of the activity to the improvement of fluency (*Fluency*), is the variable that best predicts a higher mark. Therefore, it suggests a better speaking performance. The relation between this variable and the other significant variables (namely, Design, Satisfaction, and Fluency) is represented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Statistically significant relations among fluency, design, satisfaction and performance



M= Mediation condition

With regards to the qualitative aspects collected in the questionnaire, comments made by the participants have been illustrated in Table 5 under the following categories: (a) Aspects which could improve your general satisfaction with the activity, (b) Motivation and expectations prior to the realisation of the activity, (c) What would you change to improve the design of the activity, (d) What would you change to improve the application

of the activity, (e) Which aspects could improve your fluency and oral competence, (f) Transfer of the activity to real life, and (g) Additional comments.

Table 5. Comments made by participants in the questionnaire

DIMENSION	PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS
Aspects which could improve your general satisfaction with the activity	<i>"Es personal, no he comprendido mucho el funcionamiento".</i>
Motivation and expectations prior to the realisation of the activity	<i>"No parecía muy interesante pero finalmente sí".</i>
What would you change to improve the design of the activity	<i>"Es verdad que lo facilita bastante porque ves lo que tienes que poner, es un punto bueno a destacar".</i>
What would you change to improve the application of the activity	<i>"Se debería simplificar la cantidad de información que se da". "Mejor en parejas o en pequeños grupos"</i>
Which aspects could improve your fluency and oral competence	<i>"Ayuda a corregir errores de expresión". "Me sentía nervioso al principio, pero luego me he concentrado en la actividad"</i>
Transfer of the activity to real life	<i>"Se da en situaciones cotidianas que lo más probable es que pasen". "Practicar entre compañeros y ayudarnos mutuamente". "Puedes usarlo con cualquiera que conozcas por ahí".</i>
Additional comments	<i>"No siento que haya desarrollado la fluidez al ser una actividad guiada" "Se corta la comunicación con el compañero" "Realizar más actividades de este tipo"</i>

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The first aim of this study was to investigate whether it was possible to carry out a mediation speaking activity in an ESL classroom. Previous studies showed that, despite the relative newness of the notion and the little background on the implementation of this type of activities, it is feasible to design and apply a mediation activity (Alcaraz-Mármol 2019a, 2019b; Richieri 2021). In response to our RQ1, we can confirm that it is feasible to create and/or identify mediation activities to be set up by teachers in class to enhance their students' communicative competence.

We also sought to examine what the students' perception was concerning the implementation of this methodology. In response to RQ2, our results have shown that the participants had a positive attitude towards the mediation activity as well as a positive perception of their learning. However, in terms of general satisfaction, there are no statistically significant differences between the two conditions, that is, traditional and mediation. A possible interpretation for this lack of statistical significance could involve the fact that the general satisfaction with the activity is not relevant when it comes to establishing differences between the two conditions. However, in line with previous studies (for instance, Alcaraz-Mármol 2019a and 2019b, Richieri 2021), the findings obtained in the present study are not conclusive, since there seems to be an equal perception in traditional and mediation activities.

As for the Kirkpatrick four-level model, further research is required to shed light on whether a higher positive reaction to the learning activity translates into a more effective learning under the condition of Mediation. However, there seems to be a similar level of satisfaction towards the two different activities, traditional and mediation, as perceived by the participants. Our data show that when the learners observed fluency improvement, the marks obtained tended to be higher, which confirms the relationship established by Kirkpatrick (2006). Nevertheless, in order to tease apart whether mediation activities differ from traditional activities, further work will be required in this respect.

Our third factor under analysis (RQ3) addressed whether the students' perception had a direct relation to the development of oral competence. According to previous studies (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2019b), an improvement on fluency and interaction should be expected. According to our findings, the mean obtained in the contribution of the activity to the improvement of fluency proves to be slightly higher under the condition of mediation. However, these results did not evidence statistical significance. Although there is a positive relation between the two variables, the values obtained are not

statistically significant enough to confirm a direct relation. These data may suggest that a larger sample could show whether this mean would remain stable or increase and, therefore, lend support to further standing results with regards to the relation between the condition of mediation and fluency improvement.

It is also relevant to consider the remaining variables involved in our study. Regarding the second variable, *Motivation and expectations prior to the activity*, our results have shown that although there is a slight advantage under the traditional condition, the difference is not statistically significant. This could be explained by the order in which the tasks were delivered. Since the traditional/standard activity was delivered first, the level of expectation might have proven to be higher. Therefore, these findings might be related to effects developed in the order of administration of the tasks.

Additionally, our analysis points out a positive relation between *Design* and *Fluency*. In the traditional speaking task, there is a relationship between the design of the activity and the contribution of the activity to the students' fluency, as perceived by the participants ($r=0.669^*$). This relationship is even higher in the mediation activity ($r=0.823^{**}$). This suggests that design plays a crucial role in the students' perception of the improvement of their fluency. Therefore, a more fine-grained design of the task could lead to a development of the improvement of the students' fluency. We could infer that this variable (*Design*) plays a key role in the process, that is, through the design, it is possible to obtain higher perceptions of satisfaction and improvement of fluency, which also had an effect on a better performance in the tests administered.

Design seems to be a crucial variable, suggesting that designing mediation activities of a certain standard is a relevant requirement. This might be very challenging, since the descriptors of the levels of proficiency provided by the CEFRL are not always transparent and comprehensive enough (Weir, 2005). In the mediation activity, the variable *Design* is also related to the variable *Satisfaction* ($r=0.726^*$). The significance

between these two variables only occurs under the condition of mediation, rather than under the traditional condition.

Our findings indicate that when implementing mediation activities, the most important variable is the design of the tasks, which performs as a facilitator for the learning experience. *Design* is also related to the learners' general satisfaction and our data show that when the learners observe a higher improvement of their fluency, the marks obtained are higher when compared to those ones reported when perception is lower (see regression analysis in Table 4).

On the other hand, given the significant relation between *Fluency*, *Design*, and *Performance*, it is important to consider that the variable *Fluency* holds a relevant position in the learning process. The relation between *Design* and *Satisfaction*, and the further connection with *Performance*, only takes place under the condition of mediation. In order to confirm whether there is a correlation between these variables (or lack thereof), further analyses would be required with a larger sample of participants. The scarcity of studies on this topic makes it challenging to compare our results with those ones reported by previous research. However, this study opens the door to explore this issue further.

7. CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of a linguistic mediation activity in an EFL class. Our findings have shown that the concept of linguistic mediation can be put into practice in the language teaching classroom by means of a mediation speaking task. If the task is well-designed, students are likely to perceive the activity positively, and in consequence improve their oral competence.

The results of this work indicate that the implementation of linguistic mediation activities in an EFL classroom may help students enhance communication, and it may become a crucial element in verbal language development.

Although this study is preliminary, it aims to fill in the gap in research concerning the use of linguistic mediation in an ESL classroom. There is ample room for future research. Connecting our everyday classroom reality with the CEFRL could progressively develop into the design of new communicative language materials and new forms of assessment. The CEFRL aims “to broaden the scope of language education” (North, 2020: 555), which leaves the door open to many innovative approaches. The move from the traditional four skills (written and oral reception and production) to a more action-oriented approach in which language learners and users are facilitators implies undeniable winds of change in the entire spectrum of language education. Despite its possible weaknesses, the CEFRL is a major benchmark used internationally for designing materials and for assessment. Therefore, it would be beneficial to accept a vision of language teaching and learning that might engage more significantly with the principles of the CEFRL.

Further work will expand on the scope of the research with larger samples of participants and compare the findings obtained based on their English language proficiency levels. In order to examine the positive effect of implementing mediation activities in an EFL classroom, lines for further work would imply the design and

implementation of different mediation tasks, throughout longer periods of time. These findings could lead to a less conventional understanding of the second language teaching and learning field so as to open a dialogue with the literature.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – CONSENT DECLARATION

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Elisa Navarro Hernández, profesora de AULAS del Centro Superior de Idiomas de la Universidad de Alicante, como alumna del **Máster en Lingüística Inglesa Aplicada** de la UNED, está realizando su Trabajo Fin de Máster sobre **La implementación de técnicas de mediación en el desarrollo de la competencia oral en inglés como segunda lengua**.

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la percepción por parte del alumnado de la implantación de técnicas de mediación en actividades de producción oral en inglés.

Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que cumplimente dos cuestionarios, que pueden ser completados 3 minutos cada uno.

La participación en esta actividad es voluntaria. Los datos obtenidos serán de carácter confidencial y se guardará el anonimato de cada participante.

Firmado:

Elisa Navarro Hernández

_____ DNI _____

acepto participar voluntariamente y anónimamente en la investigación **La implementación de técnicas de mediación en el desarrollo de la competencia oral en inglés como segunda lengua**, llevada a cabo por Elisa Navarro Hernández.

Declaro haber sido informado/a de los objetivos y procedimientos del estudio y del tipo de participación, así como de la confidencialidad y anonimato de la información entregada.

Declaro saber que la información que se obtenga será guardada y utilizada sólo para este estudio.

El/la participante:

Fecha:

Firmado:

APPENDIX 2

TASK 1.

This activity is done in pairs.

INSTRUCTIONS

In this activity, I would like you to talk together about something.

I am going to show you some photographs of two children, in four different situations.

I would like you to talk about what the children seem to be doing, where do you think they are, and how do you think they are feeling.

Choose the picture in which, in your opinion, the children are enjoying the most.

You have approx. 3-4 minutes.

Follow-up Questions

What was your favourite game / activity when you were a child?

What is your earliest memory?

Do you think it is important for children to be in touch with nature/animals?

APPENDIX 3

TASK 2

This activity is done in pairs.

INSTRUCTIONS

Your friend Kristian, from Norway, is coming to Alicante in July. He is going to stay here for one month. You are organizing some activities for his stay. Kristian told you that he is interested in taking a paddle-surf course, although he has never done it before.

You also know that Kristian is very keen on food, cooking, and dining. He would like to explore the local cuisine and try some of the good restaurants in the city.

Student 1.

Read the information provided (next pages) and prepare a 1-minute-voice message for Kristian, telling him about the paddle-surf lessons he could attend while he is here in the summer.

(Adapted from <https://www.campellosurfclub.es/en/courses/paddle/>)

Student 2.

Read the information provided (next pages) and prepare a 1-minute-voice message for Kristian, giving him a general overview of the many restaurants and types of food, he could try in Alicante.

(Adapted from <https://www.barcelo.com/guia-turismo/en/alicante/things-to-do/where-to-eat-in-alicante/>)

Preparation time: 4-5 minutes.

Speaking time: 1.5-2 minutes.

You are allowed to make notes.

Tips:

- Keep in mind the **receiver** of the message (should your register be formal or informal?)
- Make a list of the **most relevant information** that you need to include in your message.
- Order ideas in a natural way.
- Try to look for synonyms or equivalent expressions if possible.

Length is approximate (around 1 minute, 1 minute and a half).

- **Student 1.**

STAND UP PADDLE - SUP

SUP is one of the fastest growing water sports, both nationally and internationally, and it is suitable for all kinds of people.

It offers you great benefits. Some of those benefits are the following:

- It works on all body muscles.
- Improves stability.
- Stimulates postural muscles and prevents hip, knee, ankle and back problems.
- Increases self-esteem.
- It absolutely connects us with nature.
- It provides both physical and mental balance.

INTRODUCTORY COURSE

Content

- Basic guidelines for navigation knowledge.
- Board and Paddle parts.
- Proper body position to gain balance.
- Paddling technique and correct position.
- Changing hands.
- Board controlling to attain desired direction.
- Basic turn.

RATES €

Courses are organized according to sea conditions.

If you come alone, don't worry, you will be included in a suitable group for you



Groups: 2 to 5 people per instructor

	<i>Price</i>
2-hour course	€30
5 sessions voucher*, 2 hour each session	€125
Private classes	
	<i>Price</i>
2-hour course	€60
5 sessions voucher*, 2 hour each session	€250

Student 2

There are dozens of excellent places to eat in Alicante and not all of them serve rice and fish dishes as their speciality.

Alicante is a very cosmopolitan city, which welcomes visitors from all over the world. This means that you can find an incredibly varied range of places for dining out. From Alicante's traditional food to gourmet cuisine, there are many restaurants with affordable prices and the most original options.

If you are looking for a good area for eating out in Alicante, the best place is the area around El Postiguet Beach, the Explanada and the Cathedral. This area, which you could call the historic quarter of Alicante, is home to the largest concentration of bars and restaurants where you can partake in the tradition of going *tapas bar hopping* (or enjoying a pre-meal drink and bite), as well as have lunch or dinner before whiling away your afternoon or evening. What's more, in some cases they come included with spectacular views of the Mediterranean.

One of the best options if you want to eat well and on a budget in Alicante is the Central Market, where several stands have bars where you can sample the finest local produce. However, for a more comfortable lunch or dinner, it's worth getting a table at one of the places in the area. You will be able to find vegetarian and vegan restaurants, as well as tasty food from southern Italy with countless creative touches. Also, you can go for classic restaurants serving home-cooked food. Price is of course important, and in many of the restaurants, you will be able to choose between a 10-euro set menu or just order straight off the menu.

We are looking forward to welcoming you in Alicante!

APPENDIX 4

CUESTIONARIO PERCEPCIÓN APRENDIZAJE – ACTIVIDAD ____

1. Nivel de satisfacción general con la actividad

1 (nada satisfecho)	2 (poco satisfecho)	3 (bastante satisfecho)	4 (muy satisfecho)
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Qué aspectos ayudarían a mejorar su nivel de satisfacción con la actividad:

—

2. Motivación y expectativas antes de realizar la actividad

1 (nada motivado)	2 (poco motivado)	3 (bastante motivado)	4 (muy motivado)
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Que le impide tener un mayor nivel de motivación y expectativas:

—

3. Grado en que valora que la actividad, tal y cómo está **diseñada**, facilita su aprendizaje en general.

1 (no facilita nada)	2 (facilita poco)	3 (facilita bastante)	4 (facilita mucho)
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Qué cambiaría para mejorar el diseño: _____

4. Grado en que valora que la actividad tal y cómo está **aplicada**, facilita su aprendizaje en general.

1 (no facilita nada)	2 (facilita poco)	3 (facilita bastante)	4 (facilita mucho)
--------------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------

Que cambiaría para mejorar la aplicación: _____

5. Contribución de la actividad a la mejora de su fluidez /expresión verbal.

1 (ninguna contribución)	2 (poca contribución)	3 (bastante contribución)	4 (mucho contribución)
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Qué aspectos considera que mejorarían el aprendizaje de esta habilidad:

—

6. Nivel de aplicación de lo aprendido con este tipo de actividad en el uso del idioma en situaciones reales.

1 (ninguna aplicación)	2 (poca aplicación)	3 (bastante aplicación)	4 (mucho aplicación)
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Qué cree que habría que hacer para mejorar su nivel de aplicabilidad:

—

Indique cualquier otra observación no incluida en ninguno de los aspectos valorados en este cuestionario.

Gracias por su colaboración.