Mediation and Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL)
How Autonomous Learning Enhances Mediation Competencies

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Abstract   The present qualitative case study analyses the development of mediation strategies in English TBLL classes. Particular relevance is given to mediation strategies enhanced by cooperative learning and social interaction in the classroom: among these the ability to manage discourse, to work cooperatively and to help structure discourse and turn-taking in order to grant active participation of all members are highlighted. TBLL promotes autonomous learning and problem solving processes, as students interact and negotiate meanings as well as contents to complete tasks and produce an outcome. It is in this pedagogical context that mediation strategies are activated on different levels and support learners in the attempt to handle challenging linguistic and content-related situations. The study was carried out in a third class of a secondary school and 22 students between 15 and 16 years took part in the data collection. English TBLL modules were inserted in curricular English classes and audio-and video registrations were made during the lessons. A discourse analytical approach was applied for the analysis of the audio and video registration, in particular of the negotiating process, and semi-structured interviews were carried out with 5 students at the end of the project.

Keywords   Task-based langugage learning. Mediation. Cooperative learning. Learner autonomy. Scaffolding.

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# 1   Introduction: Mediation in the CEFR and CEFR/CV

Mediation was first introduced as a key factor in foreign language teaching and learning in the *Common European Framework for Language Learning and Teaching* (CEFR 2001, 14). This framework for language learning and teaching was an important step towards the unification of language assessment criteria at the European level. It moved away from the traditional four skills descriptions (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) and tried to comply with a more holistic understanding of language learning, which also encompassed pragmatic, social, and emotional aspects. Thus, slowly, and not without resistance, the simple skills description was substituted with new and more detailed descriptor scales with the aim of more accurately depicting the complex process of language acquisition and language learning. Mediation was introduced as a new aspect of the process and became part of the four language modes identified in the CEFR (2001, 14): reception, interaction, production, and mediation. All four aspects are subdivided into different sub-areas aimed at achieving an encompassing description of communicative competence (for the definition of communicative competence, see Habermas 1981; Piepho 1974; Hymes 1972). They are not to be considered as clearly distinct competence areas; to the contrary, all four are simultaneously present in communication, and their presence shows that language production is not solely aimed at conveying meaning; it is much more than this. It is a highly complex and sophisticated process in which different world views, attitudes, ideologies, and intentions meet and in which ideas and meaning may be created anew.

Significantly, according to the CEFR (2001, 14), the two key concepts that all language modes have in common are the co-construction of meaning and the interrelatedness between individual and social language learning. It is not surprising that the emphasis put on these two aspects implicitly attributes to mediation a key role in foreign language learning, as it is a necessary requirement for both. However, the CEFR does not acknowledge the idea of mediation to its full extent, nor does it formulate any specific descriptor scales for the competence area (2001, 33).

The concept of mediation is further developed later, in the *Common European Framework for Language Learning and Teaching. Companion Volume* (CEFR/CV 2018), where its understanding is no longer intended only as cross-linguistic mediation but also encompasses communication and learning, as well as social and cultural mediation. The CEFR/CV states for the first time that the importance of mediation in an increasingly plurilingual and culturally heterogeneous classroom cannot be underestimated, and its relevance is growing even more as new teaching approaches, such as the CLIL and the task approach, find their way into classroom practices. This is because it

is mainly in these learning settings that mediation becomes of central relevance due to the inherent necessity of the learners to satisfy their own and others' communicative needs. This way, the learners are enabled to acquire the necessary competences and strategies to master complex linguistic situations in the context of social, linguistic, and cultural diversification both inside and outside the classroom (CEFR/CV 2018, 115).

The CEFR/CV (2018, 104) distinguishes between two large areas of competence in mediation: "mediation activities" and "mediation strategies". The first area is subdivided into three sub-areas: "mediating texts", "mediating concepts", and "mediating communication". The second area, "mediation strategies", is subdivided into two sub-areas: "strategies to explain a new concept" and "strategies to simplify a text". The present research focuses on the development of mediation competences in the fields of "collaboration in group" and "leading a group", which belong to the competence area "mediation activity" and the sub-area "mediating concepts", as exemplified in the graphical figure below.
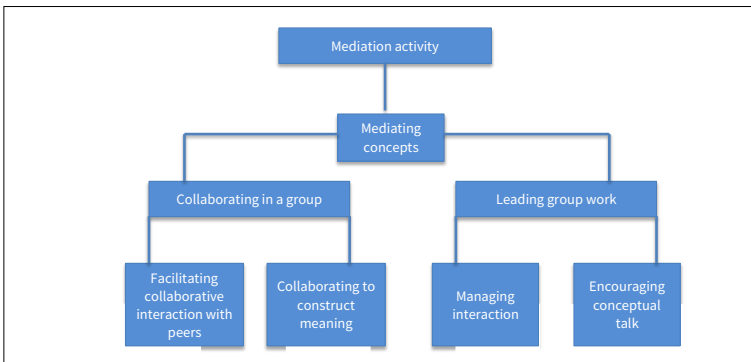
The scales "collaborating in a group" and "leading a group" are of great relevance to the educational and pedagogical domain, as they are fundamental to establishing and keeping positive collaborative interactions alive within the group. It has to be noted here that both aspects are not immanently relevant to the acquisition of new knowledge. Rather, they form an indispensable presupposition of it as a positive and cooperative atmosphere among peers and between teacher and students, thereby fostering and supporting the learning process as a whole. In particular, it is the aspect "facilitating collaborative interaction" with peers that has to be highlighted here and is of cen-

tral interest to the present research. In the CEFR/CV, "collaborative interaction" is defined as follows:

> The user/learner contributes to successful collaboration in a group that he/she belongs to usually with a specific shared objective or communicative task in mind. He/she is concerned with making conscious interventions where appropriate to orient the discussion, balance contributions, and help to overcome communication difficulties within the group. He/she does not have a designed lead role in the group, and is not concerned with creating a lead role for himself/herself, being solely concerned with successful collaboration. (CEFR/CV 2018, 118)

The key concepts underlying the scales for "facilitating collaborative interaction" can be summarized as follows:

a. Managing the discourse and one's own role consciously and giving constructive contributions
b. Being active in structuring the discourse by defining concepts and single steps collaboratively
c. Contributing to the discussion productively through the use of questions
d. Making use of questions and turn-taking to balance the contribution to the discourse by all members. (118)

Mediation, as explained previously, is functional to the acquisition of new knowledge, which it is in this context as well. Consequently, it becomes necessary to find learning settings that initiate parallel learning processes aimed at the enhancement of knowledge acquisition and competence growth, as well as the development of mediation strategies (CEFR/CV 2018, 118). In the search for such pedagogical frameworks, it is the task approach in particular that seems to offer the necessary pedagogical environment, as thanks to its didactical nature and its main focus on team and group work, it can initiate different parallel learning processes. It not only grants the learner ample occasions on which he or she is exposed to and uses the foreign language in formal and informal settings, but it also triggers social interaction and negotiating processes, wherein mediation competencies are a fundamental requirement and can be developed. This is made possible thanks to the underlying structure of TBLL, in which multimodal inputs, alongside clear task instructions, form the working basis. The inputs operate as language models and are usually followed by a language loop, wherein the structures are practised and stored in long-term memory. They provide the learners with those language items that are necessary for task completion and enable them to actively participate in the group discussion. The task instruction shows the learners the kinds of tasks they are sup-

posed to complete, how to work, and what kind of output is expected from them. Meaningful, relevant, and pedagogically valuable inputs provide the necessary framework that motivates the learners and induces them to actively contribute to the problem-solving processes that are initiated thanks to the task instructions (see Hallet, Legutke 2013, 14).

Mediation becomes a key factor precisely in the negotiating processes that are triggered during task completion, wherein the students are engaged in discussion and the elaboration of an output (Hallet, Legutke 2013, 16). This is because it is in this process that increased interaction on many levels takes place in which each learner can participate according to his or her personal capabilities. In this context, the students learn to rate their own competencies and to consequently act by regulating their personal learning processes according to their needs. They learn to avoid distressful situations in which they might feel too exposed or swamped and, on the contrary, are enabled to gradually overcome their fears and anxieties by using the trial-and-error strategy (for FLA, see Horwitz 2001; Dewaele, MacIntyre 2016). In the meantime, thanks to the group format, they are not prevented from using the language actively, as might be the case in a more traditional learning setting that is focused almost exclusively on student–teacher discourse. However, the development of such individual learning paths is made possible thanks solely to the successful use of the mediation strategies that are activated in TBLL. This is because these are necessary to facilitate the regulation of discourse, and they enable the learners to contribute to constructive collaboration in the group, which is finalised with the co-construction of meaning and cooperative learning.

2 TBLL and Mediation

The aim of TBLL is to involve the learner in a process of autonomous learning, whereby the teacher takes over the role of facilitator and, thanks to diverse scaffolding strategies, helps the learner to achieve set learning goals (Vygotsky 1978). The learners handle the multiple and multimodal inputs provided by the teacher and work together in groups to produce an output. In the course of this negotiating process, a task has to be solved. To initiate this process, it is necessary for the learners to be involved in challenging and relevant discourse in which meaning can be negotiated among peers and their own positions reflected critically. Thanks to the realistic life-world learning setting that is provided, learners' interactions in these negotiating processes activate many forms of mediation at various levels (Willis 1996; D. Willis, J. Willis 2007; Hallet, Legutke 2013).

The task solving is carried out without the direct supervision of the teacher, who limits him or herself to guiding the process by giving clear task instructions at the beginning and eliciting the sub-tasks. During the task, the teacher provides support for the learners when they need it or explicitly ask for it. Willis (1996, 16-64) provided the first model of the task circle and identified three necessary phases: the pre-task phase, the target task, and the follow-up or output phase. In the first phase, the learners are prepared for the main phase. Here, pre-existing knowledge is refreshed, and new knowledge is presented first. The target task consists of a problem-solving and discussion phase in which socially and culturally demanding content is tackled. Students are enabled to accomplish the target task, thanks to the linguistic means and inputs acquired in the pre-task phase. The multimodal input provided by the teacher follows the multiliteracy principle, as intended by the New London Group, who in 1994 developed the multiliteracy approach with the aim to make teaching more inclusive and cultural as well as linguistic communicative also by using new technologies (Cazden 2000). Thanks to this the input not only contains the necessary information to solve the task but also provides examples from different communication channels (digital, literary, visual, etc.) and different linguistic expressions and representations. Thus, providing a variety of language models and modes to which the learners can refer.

In this learner-centred setting, the learners are induced to work independently – that is, without direct tuition – and new forms of learning can be experienced. Each student is encouraged to find new ways and give form to his or her own learning process according to his or her personal needs and preferences. The fact that individual learning processes can be initiated means that the students themselves can decide the extent to which they want to engage in more difficult or easier tasks according to the provisional subjective assessment of their abilities, which can undergo change at any time. They develop an increased perception of their own language proficiency and identify areas in which they can improve their proficiency. In the meantime, they are given the opportunity to practise in a relaxed atmosphere in which they can rely on the help of their peers whenever necessary. When the zone of proximal development (the zone where learners can do unaided, and the zone where they need the help of knowledgeable adults) is reached and the learners can no longer master a situation on their own, forms of social and imitation learning take over from the teacher (Kohonen 1992, 37).

The fact that in each group, students with different proficiency levels work together and interact also promotes individualised learning. Students with a high proficiency level frequently acquire the function of language models to which weaker students can turn in case of need and, in the meantime, are given the necessary space in which to

construct more challenging learning situations for themselves. This improves their skills and competencies by enabling them to create their own personalised learning pathways. In such a complex learning setting, the acquisition of new knowledge can be promoted while fostering language skills, and forms of independent and autonomous learning are triggered. The present research tries to demonstrate that in such a pedagogical setting, learners are induced to resort to mediation to achieve the following aims:

    a.   Ensure mutual understanding among peers;
    b.   Establish communication rules within the group;
    c.   Mediate meaning for the others;
    d.   Create new meaning in a social process.

3   The Research Design and Questions

The qualitative case study was carried out at a secondary school in Bolzano, Italy. The school belongs to the German school system, so the students use German as the main language of schooling, Italian as the L2, and English as the L3. The research group consisted of 22 students between 16 and 17 years old, and their English proficiency level was between B1 and B2 CEFR. The data collection was carried out during curricular English lessons, in which the TBLL methodology was applied. The students' negotiation processes were audio-recorded, and semi-structured interviews were carried out with five students at the end of the project. The audio recordings were analysed by means of qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2003). The sampling followed the principles of the grounded theory method (for more on GTM see: Strauss, Corbin 1996; Glaser, Strauss 1967). During the recording, classroom observations were made and charted. These, together with the data analysis and the GTM, helped the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives and, consequently, granted validity (Aguado 2000, 122).

The following research questions were asked:

What forms of mediation activity during teamwork can be observed in classroom discourse in TBLL?

What forms of mediation activity in the field of team leadership can be observed in TBLL?

How does this mediation influence the learning process?

3.1 Data Analysis: Mediation in English Negotiation Processes

In the following data analysis, the observed mediation processes are grouped into thematic units with the intent to render the presented data analysis more easily understandable for the reader. The thematic units sum up and represent the results of the complete range of data analysis: the semi-structured interviews, the classroom observations, and the discourse analysis of the audio recordings. The transcription was carried out using the transcription programme Fq5 and the data analysis was facilitated by the electronic support of the MAXQUDA programme. Only the extracts of the discourse analysis are displayed here, as they seemed to be the most expressive ones and to give insight into the deep learning processes in the field of mediation initiated by TBLL.

3.2 The Use of Mediation to Facilitate Mutual Understanding

In the first task module, the students had to read, understand, and analyse different political speeches made by British and American state leaders during and shortly after the Second World War up to the present. Rhetorical figures had been presented and discussed earlier so that this knowledge could be applied to the analysis of the speeches proposed in the module. The students were given the transcripts of the speeches for deep analysis, but multimodal input was also provided; in fact, the students could watch the different leaders giving the speech on video. The complexity of the political and historical background of the speeches was quite challenging for many students, so they needed to carry out additional Internet research to gather information on the subject. Consequently, they found themselves not only in a linguistically complex situation, as the speeches were demanding with regard to both content and language, but they also had to understand the historical and political backgrounds against which the speeches were conceived, as well as their underlying purposes and biases. The intended goal of the provided task was to encourage students to read between the lines of the speeches, discover implicit messages and political alignments, and, in the meantime, identify the characteristics of the target groups for which the messages were intended.

For task completion, the learners necessitated communicative means characterised by an increase in complexity and a high register. Both requirements were only partly accessible to most of them, as many were not accustomed to dealing with linguistically and culturally complex situations. Therefore it was important that the comprehension of the texts would be ensured, thanks to the reading comprehension exercises, which induced the learners to deploy all the

available reading strategies and previous knowledge that had also been acquired in other languages (see also Cenoz, Hufeisen, Jessner 2002, 2003). During the negotiation processes, the students identified and learnt to use new resources that would enable them to discuss the contents of the speeches. Therefore, a learning process was initiated, during which the students resorted to all available strategies to ensure and facilitate individual and mutual understanding by compensating for deficiencies on the linguistic as well as the contents level. Such strategies included repetition, code switching (Cook 1992, 562; Cook 1991, 422), code mixing (Muysken 2000) spelling, simplification, written forms of communication, and non-verbal communication.

Repetition and the translation of single words or locutions played a predominant role, because, first, both immediately signalled the presence of problems of understanding in the course of discourse. Second, according to the principle of language economy, they represented the shortest way to facilitate understanding, as, thanks to this practice, immediate reactions by the peers were possible, and problems could be resolved in many cases. Repetition and translation were the most frequently used practice, as thanks to it, the flow of speech was not interrupted, so concentration switched to solely formal aspects for a very short time, and then, the discourse could be resumed without delay. This is exemplified in the following example, in which it becomes clear how the group reacts to the request of a single student by providing immediate help. Additionally, in the interviews, most students remarked that the autonomous interaction made possible thanks to TBLL helped them to acquire a new and more social understanding of learning, wherein cooperation played a predominant role, and they increasingly viewed themselves as mediators and facilitators of the learning processes of their peers as well. One student even claimed that in the group, they tried to "construct sentences together, which was very helpful to all of them".

Table 1 Recording one: code switching to ask the group for help

A:	Weird. Why you think people actually vote Donald Trump? Is there any logic?
B:	Because he is like *hem* retains *aus der Reihe.*
C:	He stands out?
A:	Yeah. He is more like an entertainer than a politician, I think.
C:	Mhm (affirmative).

In recording two, student A gives a short biographical outline of Donald Trump. Student A is a highly proficient English speaker, which is the reason, why she chose to tackle the complex subject with the language inherent to the semantic field of politics and economy. In the meantime, she is well aware that many of her peers might be overwhelmed by her presentation, so she automatically provides help. She code-switches to German and provides a German translation of specialist terminology to the listeners whenever she thinks the content could be too challenging for them. In this process, while speaking, she mediates meaning for the group, and according to her perception of her peers' language proficiency, she provides scaffolding for them. As shown here, intra-sentential and extra-sentential code switching, especially to the L1 but also to the Lx (i.e. the language that is available at the moment), is a frequently used strategy to ensure understanding. This strategy is most frequently used within languages of the same language family and helps to solve communication problems, especially at the lexical level. In the present case, the language is also the L1, and Student A can, therefore, assume that the vocabulary is familiar to all the group members.

Furthermore, code switching is also an effective strategy for switching from a formal to a more informal level of communication. This is done with the aim of creating a friendly and casual atmosphere in which all interlocutors have the impression of pulling together, thus facilitating understanding and communication. In many cases, it also indicates that a transfer from the L1 to the language of learning – in this case, English – is taking place and is being communicated to peers. By simply inserting almost unnoticeable German words into her discourse, Student A puts her new knowledge into practice, but in the meantime, she mediates it for her peers without causing them to experience discomfort.

Table 2 Recording two: mediating difficult content

A:	Who is Donald Trump? He is a billionaire businessman. He is a self-made man. He became rich as a New York real estate developer – *Immobilienmakler* – then turned to reality television. He promises to use his deal-making capabilities to enrich America. He also expressed no interest in the second amendment—*die Verbesserung*.

In example number three, Student C signals by means of the extra-sentential CS English/German signals that she is making a joke and that she is moving from a formal communication level, at which the students concentrate on the learning content, to a more colloquial one, at which she ironically comments on the noise in the library. The German word is a neologism and does not technically exist. This signals that she is moving away from the school world and shifting to one in which her peers are accustomed to communicating with each other using a more colloquial register and doing it in German, which is their L1. In this case, mediation means between different worlds that both coexist in the classroom: the world of collegiality, which provides an often critical and ironic external perspective of what is happening inside the classroom, and the inside perspective, whereby the learners are concentrated inside the learning process and cooperate within the institutional framework of the school. In this case, code switching provides the learners with the ability to switch from one world to the other and allows to shift to a more critical and ironic perspective on school practices.

Table 3 Recording three: mediating formal and informal levels

A:	You can ask the women at the information desk #00:03:00-7#
B:	Yeah, information desk (it is very loud in the library) #00:03:00-7#
C:	Bibliotheksleben (laughter) #00:03:19-7#

Another frequently observed strategy was the use of spelling to facilitate communication. This strategy of spelling out the word in the target language was adopted only when other strategies seem to have failed. Two forms of spelling could be observed. In the first form, each letter is spelled out singularly following the rules of spelling in the target language. In the second form, which is simpler and more casual, the word is pronounced the way it is written. The second form of spelling is predominant and it seems that students resort to the first form only if the second fails. Both strategies, however, work on different levels: they provide important clues about orthography, they offer orientation help for those who are unable to follow the course of the discourse, and finally, they provide important information about

specific aspects of pronunciation, as spelling allows them to recognise the similarities and differences between words in different languages, with the positive result that the transfer between languages is allowed. Thanks to transfer, the meaning of new words can be deduced by the learner and, if necessary co-constructed in the group.

The moment all of these strategies fail, the learners resort to writing or miming. In the first case, they write down difficult words for the others to read and understand. In this process, an unusual communicative channel is used. It has the disadvantage that it interrupts the flow of communication and can, therefore, be perceived as disturbing. As far as miming is concerned, it has a fun aspect that helps to maintain a positive atmosphere within the group, but it can also interrupt concentration.

All the above-mentioned strategies have the same aim – namely, to facilitate communication and understanding by mediating meaning at various levels. By using different strategies in a learning framework in which mutual support between peers becomes is essential, students soon seek to integrate and use them as part of the learning process.

3.3 Mediation and Forms of Social Learning

In TBLL, learners acquire competences in the field of autonomous and independent learning. They can discover new and different learning channels for themselves and try them out. Thanks to the pedagogical setting, they are supported by the group in this attempt. On the one hand, the group grants the spaces to the single learner in which he or she can experiment with language, and on the other hand, it provides support where this is needed. Learners overcome anxiety and learning barriers thanks to the implicit and explicit help of their peers. Here, as already stated in the introduction, competent speakers of the L3 play a predominant role because they function as language models and can be imitated by the less proficient learners; consequently, forms of imitation learning become increasingly frequent. The analysis shows that the group of peers uses different forms and degrees of scaffolding, which means that according to the degree of difficulty for the single student, the group offers a variety of forms of scaffolding at different levels of complexity. The complexity is decreased according to the reactions of the single learners. This means that the learning process of the single learner is supported by the entire group and that the scaffolding that is provided is adjusted to his or her specific needs. Consequently, the group resorts to a variety of more or less complex scaffolding strategies to allow every single learner to actively participate in the negotiation process.

Table 4 Recording four: forms of social learning

B:	So let's start, C. Are you ready?
C:	*Concentriamoci su questa cosa qui e non e non se una parola è sbagliata o no.*
B:	Could I have the pencil please?
A:	What is wrong with this one?
B:	Mmh with capital letters.

In this recording, the students are preparing a PowerPoint presentation. Student A is typing on the computer, and the others are helping her. They all try to support Student A in her task. C asks her whether she is ready and, by doing so, gives her the opportunity to ask for help and support. At the same time, C tries to reassure her by telling her that she should not be too worried about spelling every single word correctly. By CS English/Italian in this case, Student C moves to a more colloquial level so that her suggestion has a different effect. It sounds softer and loses the strictness it might have had in English, which is the language of learning. In this case, the shift from formal to informal language changes the connotative spectrum, and the locution has a different effect on the listener. As soon as A asks for help, B intervenes with the necessary support and gives her the information she requires. This registration shows how the group supports Student A in accomplishing her task, thanks to a very cooperative attitude, which becomes manifest in the different locutions.

This extract shows how forms of cooperative learning can induce learners to acquire positive attitudes towards each other. They have recognised that this learning setting provides challenging situations for the single learner, and they have learnt to support each other in these situations. This happens, on the one hand, by giving positive feedback to those in action and, on the other, by providing them with the necessary information when needed. Thanks to these positive attitudes, a cooperative environment is created, thereby facilitating the learning processes of all participants. Forms of peer learning can develop in this way, and the learners provide scaffolding for each other whenever necessary.

Evidence of this circumstance also emerged from students' semistructured interviews, in which it is repeatedly stressed that the relaxed and cooperative atmosphere supported the negotiation processes. The learners also stated that working among their peers in the provided TBLL learning setting induced a feeling of collaboration among equals far from the observing eye of the teacher and that thanks to this circumstance, all learners worked autonomously on the task and were, thus, in need of mutual support.

Table 5 Recording five: code mixing and forms of social learning

A:	No. I just have to explain, *hem*, so I chose a thing about Christmas because people eat too much, and they always say I have to go on a diet, I have to lose weight, and then they eat. They eat, and they make cookies. They eat eat eat, and then at the end of the year, so, first, they *hem wie sagt man denn Neujahr* #00:00:55-5# #00:00:55-1#
B:	Hm?
A:	Neujahr #00:00:55-1#
B:	*Capo d'anno* #00:01:00-4#
A:	*Auf* Englisch #00:01:00-4#
All laugh #00:01:00-4#	
C:	New year #00:01:00-4#

In this extract, one learner resorts to code mixing, because in the course of her explanation of different problem fields regarding Christmas holidays, she is unable to recall the words "New Year" in English. She introduces her request with the German "wie sagt man" (how do you say?) and, this way, signals that she needs help. Mediation here means being able to explicitly resort to the group in a situation of difficulty and to ask for help. This way, the group acquires the function of mediating knowledge. In fact, her peers provide her with the necessary help immediately. First, one student provides the Italian term *capo d'anno*, thus causing laughter in the group. This is a playful interlude, which again hints at the fact that there are always more worlds of meaning coexisting within a group and that a sudden shift in perspective is possible.

4 Conclusions

One desirable outcome in the CEFR/CV is clearly fulfilled in the present data analysis: the students are concerned with the successful completion of the task and collaborate constructively. No one takes over the lead role explicitly, and a feeling of solidarity arises among the peers. In order to achieve their goals, the learners resort to a number of mediation strategies. With regard to research question one, it can be stated that the most frequent forms of mediation in TBLL learning settings are mediation to ensure mutual understanding, mediation as a strategy to foster social and cooperative learning, and mediation from a formal to a more informal level. In many cases, mediation necessitates the linguistic strategy of code switching or code mixing, because it is thanks to these strategies that it can take place at different levels, as seen above, without interrupt-

ing the flow of the discourse. The data analysis also shows that mediation in the field of group leadership plays no predominant role in the present data analysis, and the focus seems to be on the aspect of mediation that refers to the area of "collaborating in the group" (CEFR/CV 2018, 104). Therefore, the second research question remains unanswered, as no examples of mediating concepts in the field of "leading a group" could be identified.

The retrospective interviews and the recordings show clearly that mediation helped students' learning processes as the group members provided mutual support. It could be said that mediation has a scaffolding function, which the learners use to help each other to cope with linguistically challenging situations. This way, each group member's learning process is influenced positively. Thanks to mutual support, students become aware of not only their strengths but also their weaknesses and can learn from their peers. Thus, an attitude of discovery with regard to individual learning paths is triggered, thereby helping the learners to identify their individual needs and to take the necessary steps to respond adequately. This way, learners acquire the ability to evaluate their learning critically and objectively with the help of their peers. This goes beyond the mere passive acquisition of linguistic skills by actively involving students in forms of informal self- and peer assessment. Language awareness can be embedded in language learning, and the wider pedagogical goal – namely that of increased learner autonomy – is achieved.

A further competence area that is developed thanks to the present learning setting concerns the tolerance of ambiguity in foreign language discourse and the mediation of meaning between different cultural and social reference systems. Intercultural communication can be successful only if it takes into account the diverse reference systems that emerge and influence discourse. Tolerance and mediation are necessary for the implementation of cooperative practice and for successful communication. Students acquire an increased awareness that language development is indissolubly linked to the historical and social development of a given society and that discourse is embedded in it. Therefore, in order to render authentic communication possible, it is necessary to be aware of these different cultural frameworks and to mediate between them in order to render authentic communication possible.

It is also in this sense that the coexistence of different worlds as superimposed discourse worlds (Edmonson 1985; 2004, 163) and parallel spaces inside the classroom can be understood. Thus, practices of translanguaging and code switching give insight into the effective mediation of meaning between these different worlds and the creation of new meaning thanks to the practice of blending spaces and metaphors (blended space theory), which can change and influence the whole sociolinguistic framework (Aronin, Singleton 2012). Thanks

to these practices, the learner can slip into different language roles and put himself or herself inside or outside the learning process, thereby positioning himself or herself as an independent individual who is able to critically reflect not only classroom practices and their effects but also the diverse reference worlds that are present.

Mediation in this context also means playing with different codifications of emotions (Pavlenko 2005). Emotions are expressed differently in different linguistic and cultural contexts and students, thanks to the analysis of the political speeches that recognise these different emotional codifications. Students learn that in intercultural discourse, they play an important role, because a sound knowledge of emotional expressions in different cultures and the mediation between them is often vital for successful communication.

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