Maria Stathopoulou, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Magdalini Liontou, University of Oulu, Finland

Phyllisienne Gauci, University of Malta, Malta

Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer, University of Hamburg, Germany

Assessing cross-linguistic mediation: Insights from the METLA project

Abstract: Despite growing interest and renewed calls to embrace a multilingual turn in education, particularly in terms of development and implementation of plurilingual pedagogies, a pervasive monolingual mindset is still observable in the field of assessment. In this contribution, we present the main characteristics of cross-linguistic mediation as an ability to be considered in the foreign/second/heritage language classroom and discuss why and how it is particularly appropriate to renew assessment practices anchored in a monolingual tradition. The point of departure for our reflections is the *Mediation in Teaching, Learning and Assessment* (METLA) project within the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), which sees cross-linguistic mediation as part of an individual's plurilingual repertoire. At the heart of the project is the view that alternative assessment tasks, which allow for the use of different languages, are useful in evaluating learners' performance in mediation as well as in developing learners' mediation skills as learners are encouraged to reflect on the entire mediation process.

Keywords: cross-linguistic mediation, CEFR Companion Volume, multilingual assessment, METLA

1. Introduction

The research field of multilingual assessment has gained momentum in light of developments in relation to the complexification of the linguistic and cultural issues of modern societies, due to global exchanges and mobilities. Such changes are reflected in studies on the dynamics of being and becoming plurilingual (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), multilingual pedagogies (Kirsch & Duarte, 2020) and pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021) in order to cope with linguistic diversity in the classroom. Nevertheless, a persistent "monolingual habitus" (Gogolin, 1994) still pervades teaching and assessment practices (Melo-Pfeifer & Thölkes, 2022). This means that, despite positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity and the different repertoires of their students (Haukås, 2016;

Heyder & Schädlich, 2014; Portolés & Martí, 2018), many teachers even today adopt the monolingual paradigm in teaching and assessment (Camenzuli et al., 2022; Melo-Pfeifer & Thölkes, 2022). The reasons put forward can be related to lack of training, preparation and self-confidence, lack of adequate materials, and the persistent belief that evaluation in a specific target language has to be kept monolingual. As asserted by Dendrinos, "language teachers and testers do not know how to assess language skills or content knowledge using languages in combination" (2019, p. 3) while international proficiency testing also remains monolingual (Dendrinos, 2013). It, therefore, comes as no surprise that tasks involving more than one language, such as the cross-linguistic mediation tasks discussed in this contribution, are sometimes looked at sceptically (Melo-Pfeifer & Helmchen, 2022). The same can be said regarding assessment practices that make use of more than just the target language or the full repertoire of the students to access their content knowledge. Unfortunately, disregarding students' resources to make proof of their knowledge leads to linguistic and cognitive inequality in education (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2023).

The relationship between multilingualism and assessment can be analyzed from two different angles (Melo-Pfeifer & Ollivier, 2023). First is the assessment of students' plurilingual competence, meaning their abilities to cope with linguistic diversity in specific situations. Second is the assessment of plurilingual students, meaning the evaluation of their content knowledge in different school subjects, through more "fair and equitable forms of evaluation for all students, regardless of prior language background, educational context and geographical location" (De Angelis, 2021, p. 1). While the former is more common in the context of foreign language learning, the latter more specifically relates to the multiple subjects the student is expected to learn at school. In this case, testing accommodations (De Backer et al., 2017; Shohamy & Menken, 2015) can be planned, for instance, by providing students with more time to answer, reducing the number of questions or allowing students to use external resources, such as dictionaries. Other strategies might include the use of their home languages and other semiotic resources besides the language(s) of the school to accomplish the evaluation tasks. In either case, multilingual testing and assessment are still rare and even when the aforementioned accommodation strategies are used, assessment of plurilingual students and their competences remains predominantly guided by a monolingual paradigm. The reason may lie in the fact that multilingual assessment is a challenging task, as stated by López et al. (2017, p. 100):

> the constructs to be measured in multilingual assessments must be clearly defined. Empirical and operational assessment development work should examine the extent to

which the multilingualism construct, operationalized through a heteroglossic or holistic view, can be feasibly assessed. Moreover, it is equally important to have a clear understanding of how multilingual communication works.

In much the same vein, Dunlea and Erickson (2018) admit that even if encouraging the development of plurilingual competence in the language classroom, measuring such competence, if possible at all (Chalhoub-Deville, 2019), is a challenge that has not yet been addressed. The challenge results both from the complex nature of the construct to be measured as well as the difficulties attached to the design and implementation of valid, reliable, adequate, and practical testing formats and instruments.

The complexity of the construct is visible in the definition of plurilingual competence by the *Common European Framework for Languages* (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001), according to which plurilingual competence may involve (among others) the ability to:

- switch from one language to another;
- express oneself in one language and understand the other;
- call upon the knowledge of a number of languages to understand a text;
- play with alternative forms of expression in different languages;
- mediate across languages.

The notion of mediation is actually core in plurilingualism and within its complexity. It allows one to make sense of the heteroglossic or multivoiced nature of the social exchanges and language learning process in our increasingly diverse societies (Piccardo, 2016), where individuals develop their plurilingual competence in very different ways and merge different resources, according to their complex linguistic biographies. On the other hand, in terms of design and implementation of tests that measure such plurilingual competence, one cannot ignore the difficulty in constructing instruments that can classify, compare, and differentiate students based on their plurilingual accomplishments.

In this contribution, we delve deeper into the specific dynamics of assessing plurilingual competence by focusing on the assessment of cross-linguistic mediation as a communicative skill. We first discuss the concept of cross-linguistic mediation and the newly introduced descriptive scales in the CEFR *Companion Volume* (CV) (Council of Europe, 2020) as a way of introducing multilingual assessment practices which make use of the CEFR can-do statements, particularly those referring to mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Following this discussion, we present the METLA (*Mediation in Teaching,*

Learning and Assessment) project[1]and the way assessment is conceived and integrated in METLA tasks. We will see that cross-linguistic mediation tasks imply the use of at least two languages and can open up spaces for multilingual evaluation practices that include other curricular languages (and not just the target language) as well as students' home languages. Throughout this contribution, *multilingualism* is understood as the result of a situational context whereby multiple languages co-exist but are utilized separately, as opposed to *plurilingualism* which focuses on the individual, refers to his/her ability to use more than one language and is associated with the notions of intercultural competence and democratic citizenship. As we will see, the notion of plurilingualism features prominently in different European language policy documents such as the CEFR-CV.

2. Defining cross-linguistic mediation

Cross-linguistic mediation is considered as part of someone's plurilingual and pluricultural competence whereby the *mediator* acts as a "go-between", making meanings accessible to parties who cannot (or can only partially) understand one another. The *cross-linguistic* mediator acts as an intermediary between two (or more) different cultures, languages, discourses and/or texts. S/he is also a plurilingual social actor actively participating in two worlds, drawing upon source language content and shaping new meanings in the other language for the readers or listeners of a different linguistic or cultural background.

The CEFR (2001) introduced the term *mediation* as a way to "make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly". Within this framework, the mediator's role is to reduce the distance or the tension between different parties (Coste & Cavalli, 2015, p. 12). From a social perspective, mediation thus brings individuals together, as argued by Swain et al. (2015, p. 151). The CEFR (2001) introduced the concept of mediation by seeing translating, paraphrasing, recording and summarizing as instances of mediation through the reconstruction of the source text in order to become accessible to another person or group of people. Unfortunately, back in 2001, the CEFR failed to provide descriptors for the

---

1   The METLA project (2020–2022) was funded by the European Centre for Modern languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe. Team members are Maria Stathopoulou (Coordinator), Phyllisienne Gauci, Magdalini Liontou, and Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer. More information about the project can be found here: www.ecml.at/mediation.

particular ability, resulting in mediation not being systematically taught, assessed or researched in foreign language classrooms (Stathopoulou, 2013, 2015).

Notwithstanding this, a few years later we started seeing some interesting home-grown initiatives in relation to the assessment of mediation. One such notorious example comes from Greece, where testing candidates' (oral and written) mediation performance through tasks that involve relaying information from one language to another (from Greek to English) has been one of the innovations of the KPG examination system since 2003.[2]

In the meantime, in the more recent publication of the CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) (Council of Europe, 2020), the term *mediation* was refined, and the concept diversified, while new categories, scales and strategies were presented. According to the CEFR-CV, "in mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning (...) from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 90). "Mediating a text", "mediating communication", and "mediating concepts" became the three main categories which define mediation:

(a) "Mediating a text" involves relaying information to a person with no access to the original text due to linguistic, cultural or social barriers. "Passing on" to another person messages from a text is the key practice here.

(b) "Mediating concepts" is more related to the pedagogic aspects of mediation. The scales here refer to educational domains which require managing interaction on the part of the teachers, collaborating to construct meaning and facilitating collaborative interaction, among others.

(c) "Mediating communication" scales refer to the process of facilitating understanding between participants in tensions, disputes or disagreements. Negotiating, creating shared spaces and resolving conflicts are the key practices here.

In this paper we focus primarily on "mediating a text" and the use of descriptive scales which relate to the way information is transferred from one text to another, namely: relaying specific information; explaining data; processing text; translating a written text; note taking; expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature); analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature).

---

2   KPG is an acronym for the Greek title *Kratiko Pistopiitiko Glossomathias,* a multilingual exam suite which leads to certification in language proficiency: https://rcel2.enl.uoa. gr/kpg/en_index.htm

As indicated by Piccardo et al. (2019), mediation encompasses reception, production and interaction, while the main focus of mediation is not self-expression but rather accommodating other people's understanding. Therefore, the mediator can potentially negotiate between languages, cultures and information that could otherwise act as barriers to someone's understanding. In this sense, cross-linguistic mediation is also closely connected to plurilingual competence since when participating in mediation tasks, a language user should take into consideration the cultures and the various languages involved (Council of Europe, 2020). As stated by Gutiérrez Eugenio and Saville (2017), by shifting the focus to plurilingual repertoires, individuals can focus on their full language abilities and develop them in an integrated way while avoiding learning languages in isolation.

3. Assessing cross-linguistic mediation

3.1. Rationale

The movement of populations, the subsequent flow of refugees and migrants as well as the fluid, heteroglossic (as opposed to monoglossic) language practices typical of the world nowadays, have led to the need for educational reforms as far as the teaching of languages in Europe is concerned.

In such a diverse context, inclusion, together with the right to education for all, have been closely associated with equal opportunities in schools, the acceptance of individual needs and the promotion of social justice (Hodkinson, 2010). In this respect, Shohamy (2011) states that a monolingual view of assessment could lead to the opposite, such as the segregation of various groups of learners who share a multilingual background which could also potentially lead to false conclusions about learners' academic skills. She also emphasizes that embracing the entire linguistic repertoire of plurilingual people in assessment is a way of empowering multilingual communities suffering from discrimination in a monolingual assessment setting.

A number of research studies have indicated the need for addressing the concept of multilingualism in assessment practices in Europe and beyond (Chalhoub-Deville, 2019; De Angelis, 2021; Saville, 2019; Schissel et al., 2019; Stathopoulou, 2018, 2020) and to take into account the full range of students' linguistic repertoires in those practices (Lenz & Berthele, 2010). Given the increased focus on multilingualism in language education, a harmonisation of teaching and assessment practices would be desirable (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). There is, in other words, a need to adopt plurilingual approaches, not only to

language teaching and learning but also to assessment. The importance of such harmonization is further emphasized by the phenomenon known as the washback effect of language assessment. Unfortunately, teachers and students tend to prioritize areas perceived as crucial components of language assessment while they pay less attention to parts of their syllabus which are not included in the assessment process (Wall, 2012).

In their historical review of assessment practices in European language policy, Gutiérrez Eugenio and Saville (2017) summarize assessment trends from 1989 to current practices. They emphasize that even though the first two periods, 1989–2002 and 2003–2015, focused on measurement and standardization of assessment practices among different countries, the efforts were not fruitful due to the wide variety of socio-cultural contexts, purposes of assessment, as well as presentation and interpretation of results which made comparisons almost impossible. On the other hand, during the third period, from 2015 onwards, they contend that a transition to localized solutions and adaptations is being sought in order to serve the needs of language learning skills in language learners' own unique context. These adaptations may include, amongst others, the use of formative assessment, the integration of the CEFR in language education and the modernization of "current teaching and assessment systems to ensure learning outcomes are those required by our fast changing, diverse and ever more globalized societies, addressing the needs of both local and European labour markets" (Gutiérrez Eugenio & Saville, 2017).

Within the framework of multilingual and multicultural classrooms, mediation skills are important for students to bridge linguistic and socio-cultural gaps and co-construct meaning. However, teaching cross-linguistic mediation without embracing it in assessment practices could demote any effort of offering this valuable skill to foreign language learners.

The will to assess cross-linguistic mediation ensues from the need for authentic communicative assessment tasks in an increasingly language-diverse society (Stathopoulou, 2020). Cross-linguistic mediation echoes the need for assessment tasks extracted and modified for language purposes from (multilingual)real-life situations that students are potentially already experiencing or will come across in the future. Real-life situations must be used in the construction of assessment tasks to attract learners' interest and to help them associate the learning of a foreign language with their current or future needs (such as in multilingual classrooms or among multilingual families, in international workplaces or university programmes). The language classroom, as a place for teaching and assessing mediation through cross-linguistic mediation activities that mirror real-life

situations, contributes to preparing learners for the multilingual societies in which they live and act.

In order to create responsible assessment practices in cross-linguistic mediation, one must first consider the different domains, contexts and spaces where mediation can take place and then discuss a number of parameters and existing examples of how cross-linguistic mediation assessment tasks are constructed in the language classroom. In other words, before discussing assessment, we need to address some key considerations which are specific to the practice of cross-linguistic mediation.

3.2. Mediation and assessment: Key considerations

We have so far defined cross-linguistic mediation and provided a rationale for assessing it as a result of the practical needs of multilingual societies. In this section, we discuss some considerations in constructing mediation tasks for assessment purposes.

Localization of assessment. Chalhoub-Deville (2019) calls our attention to an alternative paradigm when considering the specific and unique needs of multilingual assessment practices. She highlights the issue of "localization" of multilingual assessment practices and stresses the relevance of local theories regarding the construction and administration of assessment while responding at the same time to potential issues of validity. A critical aspect of assessing cross-linguistic mediation as a form of multilingual assessment practices is that it is bound to and influenced by the local contexts since the languages involved as the source and target texts affect the structure of the assessment tasks. A plethora of studies acknowledge that localization includes unique characteristics of languages, cultures, disciplines and institutions, among others (Chalhoub-Deville, 2019; Dendrinos, 2009; Gutiérrez Eugenio & Saville, 2017; Jenkins & Leung, 2014, 2017, 2019; Leung et al., 2016). In discussing language entrance examinations, Jenkins and Leung (2019) call us to abandon the one-size-fits-all ideology of language assessment through "international testing practices", since the traditional aspects of language testing (such as comparability and differentiation) are problematic when applied to the development of plurilingual competence. As plurilingual competence very much depends on specific life trajectories, comparability might be difficult, and differentiations might prove unfair. Mannion (2015), Karavas and Mitsikopoulou (2019) also argue that glocal (global+local) approaches to assessment and testing can be learner-centred and context-sensitive. Glocal testing tools have international features (e.g., are based on the CEFR levels or other international policy documents) but respect the social

needs of people who take the exams in terms of the topics and tasks chosen, which makes them purposeful and context-sensitive. Including localized cross-linguistic mediation tasks in such tests can greatly benefit test-takers who need to develop their mediation skills to participate successfully in multilingual and multicultural societies. Mediation assessment tasks thus need to be "situated" in the sociolinguistic contexts the students inhabit.

Authenticity and purposefulness. Emphasis should also be placed on the social aspect of mediation. Cross-linguistic mediation tasks should promote social inclusion by bringing together different parties and helping them overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, which could cause tension. This construct should also be reflected in the assessment task. In other words, it is not enough to have an assessment task which is translated in different languages, or to follow the CEFR-CV mediation scales. It is equally important to emphasize the purpose of the task at hand through authentic examples which may potentially also help in promoting social inclusion. By mediating between two different languages from the source to the target text, language users also mediate across the respective two cultures.

Dendrinos (2006) and Stathopoulou (2015) argue that mediation is not focused on the mere transfer of information from one language/culture to another. Rather it is a transformational process of the source text in which the context, such as the audience and the purpose of communication, is also to be taken into consideration by the mediator. Hence, the target text is not a copy of the source text which might only be loosely connected to it. Instead, the source text is interpreted through the lenses of the mediator who takes an active stance (Dendrinos, 2014). Stathopoulou (2019, p. 249) also refers to mediators as decision-makers who have to "consider a variety of contextual factors and employ a variety of mediation strategies." In an empirical study conducted by Schissel et al. (2019), students showed positive reactions towards assessment tasks in which the source texts were given in English and Spanish while the output was assessed in English and praised the authenticity of the tasks and the similarities to real-life situations.

Construction of mediation assessment tasks and CEFR-CV alignment. Now that the framework of cross-linguistic mediation has been defined through the CEFR-CV and scales have been created, it is worth discussing how practitioners and institutions have instantiated them as part of their assessment practices. In Martyniuk (2017), Polish MA students consulted the CEFR-CV can-do statements and designed a number of assessment mediation tasks. They then reflected on certain challenges encountered while constructing their tasks and made specific reference to the way the can-do statements in the "mediating a text"

category are considered equal to the cross-linguistic and intra-linguistic mediation performance statements. This is a very relevant exercise that merits further discussion. For example, one should consider the different approaches that must be adopted when constructing cross-linguistic from intra-linguistic mediation tasks for assessment using the same performance scales. A study by Harsch et al. (2019) in the Cuban context indicated challenges related to the adaptation of CEFR-CV scales and issues related to formulating assessment tasks and aligning them with the CEFR-CV framework. The study focuses on the lack of statements for certain proficiency levels and difficulties of transnational transposition. This study highlights the difficulties of calibrating writing (assessment) tasks to meet specific descriptors, which might be transferred to mediation (assessment) tasks.

As to summative assessment practices, an example to take into consideration is the Greek national examination battery (KPG), which is based on a "glocal" system where both international practices and the local needs of the people living in the Greek society (e.g., topics, themes and texts) are considered through mediation tasks in order to accommodate test-takers (Dendrinos, 2009). Mediation is an important component of the KPG exam which includes mediation tasks in the writing and speaking modules. Having already discussed the importance of localization, Stathopoulou (2020) illustrates how she systematically involved teachers as experts in their local context and identified the scales in written mediation assessment tasks which were more relevant in the Greek context. Her findings indicate that "relaying specific information in writing" got the highest scores while "translating a written text in writing" and "analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)" scales were scored as the least relevant. Additionally, practitioners seem to express a different opinion regarding the level of difficulty for each proficiency level on some scales. Such examples of good practice which involve the engagement of foreign language teachers in the integration of a multilingual approach to their classrooms through cross-linguistic mediation are indeed commendable, since these efforts still remain limited (Solly & Esch, 2014), and generally lack a supportive environment (Allard, 2017). Pavlovskaya and Lankina (2019) also created assessment tasks for oral mediation. The source texts were in the form of videos related to leadership, an authentic concept for management students, while the target text was the result of a group discussion based on the topic, through an introductory question made by the teacher. They empirically discovered notable differences in the students' answers among various proficiency levels (B2-C1) in the assessment process. Specifically, they made a distinction between B2 and higher levels; in the former, students struggled to understand complex abstract ideas and focused partially on the task by explaining two or three concepts, while in the latter, students could mediate the

whole notion. These findings offer the opportunity for an open dialogue between theory and practice. Being aware of the difficulties and the linguistic demands of tasks across proficiency levels is crucial for the test-designer who wishes to construct mediation tasks for different levels.

Alternative assessment practices. In such practices, the focal point is on "assessment procedures which are less formal than traditional testing, gathered over a period of time rather than being taken at one point in time, usually formative rather than summative in function, often low-stakes in terms of consequences and claimed to have beneficial washback effects" (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001, p. 228). Ongoing assessment tasks such as portfolios, learning diaries, conferences, presentations and various projects which provide opportunities for self- and peer-assessment can be used to meet the requirements of each cross-linguistic scale as well as the strategies involved. Saito (2019) provides an example of what an e-portfolio could look like when we take into consideration overall mediation scales and adapt the can-do statements in order to provide an ongoing assessment. While the adoption of CV mediation scales is a starting point, scales focusing specifically on cross-linguistic mediation could also be very useful and will hopefully be developed in the future.

Although cross-linguistic mediation assessment practices are not developed and implemented everywhere to the same extent, another recent example has been reported in an ESAP (English for Specific and Academic Purposes) course offered in a higher education setting in Finland. As part of the final assignment of the course, medical students participated in a student conference simulation task where they had to transform the information extracted from various academic texts to a poster presentation, as well as consider the audience and the languages involved. The findings of the study indicated that the students acknowledged authenticity as a strong asset of the assessment task and they also mentioned the use of various mediation strategies in their answers (Liontou & Braidwood, 2021). As a matter of fact, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses can be used as springboards for the inclusion of mediation in language assessment (Stathopoulou, 2021) through relevant, discipline-oriented and authentic cross-linguistic mediation tasks. In Austria, the CEBS (Centre for vocational languages) implemented a plurilingual oral exam at several types of Upper Secondary Vocational Colleges. Here learners have the opportunity to show evidence of their oral plurilingual competences (between L2 and L3) through tasks in which test-takers need to pass on information from an oral or written input (language: German) orally or in writing using two other languages (e.g., English and French) and to take part in a discussion with partners speaking

two different languages, in order to achieve a common goal such as planning a project.[3]

In conclusion, cross-linguistic mediation assessment tasks open up ways of thinking about the assessment of plurilingual competence, in general, and of the learner's mediation ability itself, more specifically. While sustaining the traditional parameters of assessment and their supposed universality, in this section we saw how mediation assessment requires a reconsideration of what is meant by validity, reliability and objectivity, and opens up venues to think of "situatedness (or localization)" and "differentiation" in evaluation practices.

4. Assessing cross-linguistic mediation ability in METLA

In this section, we provide a short overview of the *Mediation in Teaching, Learning and Assessment* (METLA) project which considers the important role of assessment both in developing learners' mediation skills and evaluating mediation performance. We also reflect on the methodological and pedagogical approaches adopted and briefly address the four issues referred to previously: localization of assessment; authenticity and purposefulness; construction of mediation assessment tasks and CEFR-CV alignment; as well as alternative assessment practices.

4.1. Aims, underlying principles and outputs of the METLA project

The METLA project (2020–2022) draws upon pluralistic approaches to education where the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence plays a key role. Its aim is to help teachers gain knowledge on how to develop and assess their students' mediation skills. The project's outputs echo the Council of Europe values and principles of respect for human rights, mutual understanding, social cohesion, inclusion (rather than exclusion) of languages, intercultural dialogue, culture of democracy, and cooperation. Specifically, the METLA project has developed a Teaching Guide for foreign language teachers of primary and secondary education who want to include linguistic mediation in their teaching practices. The Guide contains information about the theory and practice of language teaching, learning and assessment in relation to mediation together with examples of mediation tasks in different languages. Such examples draw on the new CEFR-CV (Council of Europe, 2020). The Guide (see Stathopoulou et al., 2023) offers orientations and provides suggestions as to how the Foreign Language (FL) teacher can:

---

3   Find more about the CEBS project here: https://www.cebs.at/home/plurilingualism

- help learners develop their mediation skills and strategies;
- adapt and differentiate tasks across languages, proficiency levels, learner groups;
- incorporate learners' heritage/home languages;
- integrate the pluricultural component in activities which ask for the parallel use of languages;
- develop learners' collaborative and social skills across languages;
- develop learners' intercultural understanding, openness, respect towards other cultures;
- assess learners' mediation performance mainly by providing ideas for alternative assessment.

The METLA project also involves the development of a databank with downloadable sample cross-linguistic mediation tasks in different languages for different educational contexts.

4.2. METLA mediation tasks for assessment

Mediation in METLA tasks entails the purposeful selection of information by the mediator from a source text in one language and the relaying of this information into another language, with the intention of bringing closer interlocutors who do not share the same language. Cross-linguistic mediation can thus be taught and assessed through METLA tasks which ask for the use of different languages (i.e., passing on information from one language to another), thus softening linguistic and cultural gaps in the process (Stathopoulou, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019).

In the METLA project, the designed cross-linguistic mediation tasks are plurilingual in nature, encouraging learners to be aware and make use of additional and/or foreign languages from their repertoire, thus, being anchored in their sociolinguistic lives. More specifically, the tasks encourage students to actively create linguistic bridges, recognize the similarities and differences across languages and use different languages and semiotic resources (such as gestures, postures, gazes, mimic, drawings, etc.) for different communicative purposes. From this perspective, the tasks encourage students to participate in language negotiation by alternating languages, and in the plurilingual co-construction of meaning. Such a stance implies that languages do not need to stay separate during task completion as students might need to navigate different linguistic resources at the same time. Closely related to the plurilingual perspective included in task design, METLA tasks also aim at developing students' intercultural competence: first, the tasks aim at making students understand and appreciate the perspective and worldview of others; second, the tasks also stimulate

students' engagement in open, respectful, appropriate, and effective interactions across languages and cultures; third, the tasks lead students to adopt a positive attitude towards all forms of linguistic and cultural diversity, respectively *savoir-comprendre*, *savoir-faire* and *savoir-être* (Byram, 1997, 2021).

Because of these main tenets, METLA cross-linguistic tasks are aligned with the pluralistic approaches of learning foreign languages (i.e., didactic approaches using activities which involve different languages and varieties; Candelier et al., 2012), as learners are asked to engage their full linguistic repertoire and productively make use of transfer of information across languages. They are, of course, also in line with the new CEFR-CV descriptors which refer to linguistic mediation, an important parameter in task design as discussed in the previous section.

In methodological and didactical terms, the tasks are thematically organized (each scenario is structured around a specific topic such as travel, health, etc.), while the sub-tasks provide an internal sequence. Based on real-life topics and the scenarios, tasks are strategies-based, meaning that in each scenario, a number of mediation strategies are specifically targeted. Despite an overall structure, the tasks are flexible: on the one hand, they can be adapted to different teaching contexts fostering teachers' autonomy and, on the other hand, they answer to different students' profiles, catering for differentiation needs. The tasks also leave room for creativity, both for teachers and learners.

Some key aspects of cross-linguistic mediation tasks include: communication across languages and cultures; the relevance of the source and target text; the purpose of the task; the strategies involved; the importance of genre and target audience and much more. In terms of pedagogical approaches, because of the CEFR orientation, which promotes a co-actional approach to teaching and learning, METLA tasks are either collaborative (involving pair or group work) or individual and are context-oriented and purpose-related, which means that an attempt was made to present authentic tasks relevant to the students' everyday communicative needs. Tasks are thus learner-centred, catering for students' needs and relating to their personal, social and emotional experiences. This orientation is also visible in the way the tasks take the social and cultural dimensions of language learning into account, thus reflecting the link between language and culture. In the example below, from a B2-level mediation task from the METLA Teaching Guide (see Stathopoulou et al., 2023), learners have to read a text in Spanish (Language A)[4] and relay textual and cultural information into another text in English (Language B):

---

4   The source text does not appear here due to space constraints. Such tasks can be used both for teaching and testing purposes.

Step 4

When Miguel is back in Mexico, he posts the following picture on his social media page. Your dad asks you if you know what this is all about. You remember having seen something about the *día de los Muertos* in a movie, and decide to look for information about this tradition online. You find the following article in Spanish: Read it and **explain** to your dad, who only speaks English, what this tradition entails. Send him a written text (private) on Facebook messenger.

As it becomes evident from the example above, cultural awareness is not confined to the idea of relaying information from the source text to the target text only across languages, but also involves moving across various styles, genres, and dialects. In this case, learners have to produce a personal message on a social media platform thus respecting the stylistic conventions of this type of (target) text.

Because they are student-oriented, cross-linguistic mediation tasks also privilege self and peer-assessment, as a key feature of formative assessment, which contribute to the development of leaner autonomy. Following Gorter and Cenoz (2017, p. 43), assessment tools should match actual language practices and "if teaching is going in the direction of a multilingual focus, assessment should also follow the same path". For this reason, METLA mediation tasks involve a self-assessment component at the end (see two examples below) which asks students to reflect on how they approached the different mediation tasks (through what strategies, what they learnt, etc.).

Figure 1: Self-assessment component in METLA mediation tasks

As it becomes evident from the examples in Figure 1, the METLA project clearly puts emphasis on alternative assessment. Alternative assessment, or assessment that is not meant to be standardized or achieved through tests, can be carried out in the realm of both summative (at the end of a course/a year/a semester etc.)

and formative (ongoing) assessment. It is suggested that learners are assessed on an on-going basis by the teachers and/or themselves and they are encouraged to document their progress in the development of cross-linguistic mediation strategies.

As far as testing is concerned, learners' cross-linguistic mediation ability can be tested through mediation test tasks which may involve one or all of the following (see also Stathopoulou, 2020):

- summarizing oral or written information read or heard in one language and presenting it orally or in writing in another language, including changing the discourse and/or genre of the original text for a given communicative purpose;
- using information from different sources in different languages in order to produce a written or an oral text. The language output may be bilingual or trilingual.

Below is an example of a C2-level mediation test task taken from the METLA Teaching Guide (see Stathopoulou et al., 2023) which illustrates these points. Note that source texts have been omitted.

Learners have to read two articles written in different newspapers. The articles present research findings with figures about the educational system in France and Germany and the effectiveness of each system in its respective country. Article no 1 is written in French while Article no 2 is written in German. Students have to read both texts and **summarise, combine and paraphrase** information found there in order to produce a text to be included in a German **poster** which will inform about the differences between the two educational systems.

It is a complex task which involves not only cross-linguistic mediation but also interlinguistic mediation (one article is in German and some of its information has to be relayed in German). It requires learners to use the appropriate mediation strategies in order to use the relevant information which in some cases is also numerical and produce a poster (a different genre from the original). Students have to summarize, paraphrase and re-organize the original information respecting at the same time the target generic conventions.

The practical examples given above illustrate how such specific assessment tasks might hardly be transposable to other linguistic and cultural contexts, because of linguistic and cultural idiosyncrasies at hand. Therefore, as stated in Section 3.2, cross-linguistic mediation assessment tasks are prone to great variability and must be situated, referring to tangible contexts and (individual) competences. The challenge of standardization (and even the question of its necessity in evaluating plurilingual competence) becomes apparent.

5. Synthesis and perspectives

Our contribution to cross-linguistic assessment practices clearly indicates how it is possible to make use of learners' full linguistic repertoires even if this entails rethinking standardization and uniform validity as universal values of language evaluation practices. Firstly, if we acknowledge that it is possible to move along the *continuum* of being and becoming plurilingual, either by growing up bilingual through migration, by learning foreign languages at school, or a combination of both, multilingual assessment is valuable both for students with a migrant background who still have not developed command of the language of schooling and also for those learning multiple languages at school or in any other educational setting. Multilingual assessment practices can go beyond the use of the target-language and the language of instruction and embrace previously learnt foreign languages and students' home languages, in an integrated and holistic view of language education. This entails the need for differentiated multilingual assessment items and formats if we want to address the complexity of students' language biographies and foster (cognitive) equity in language education in general and in language classrooms in particular.

Secondly, cross-linguistic mediation tasks can play an important part in disseminating multilingual assessment practices. As cross-linguistic mediation is slowly but surely gaining ground in foreign language teaching and learning through language policy documents at a European level, its assessment might become an inspiration to think of other innovative forms of assessment, both in the foreign language classroom, as well as in other school subjects, while contributing to changing the prevailing monolingual mindset. The assessment of cross-linguistic mediation competences can, thus, inspire new forms of assessment for plurilingual students and new ways of thinking plurilingual assessment for the foreign language classroom.

References

Alderson, C. J., & Banerjee, J. (2001). Language testing and assessment. *Language Teaching, 34*, 213–236. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800014464.

Allard, E. C. (2017). Re-examining teacher translanguaging: An ecological perspective. *Bilingual Research Journal, 40*(2), 116–130. https://doi:10.1080/15235882.2017.1306597

Ascenzi-Moreno, L., García, O., & Lopéz, A. (2023). Latinx bilingual students' translanguaging and assessment: A unitary approach. In S. Melo-Pfeifer & C. Ollivier (Eds.), *Assessment of plurilingual competence and plurilingual learners in educational settings* (14 pp.). Routledge.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence revisited*. Multilingual Matters.

Camenzuli, R., Lundberg, A., & Gauci, P. (2022). Collective teachers' beliefs about multilingualism in Maltese primary education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 26*(4), 379–394. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2114787

Candelier, M., Camilleri-Grima, A., Castellotti, V., de Pietro, J.-F., Lörincz, I., Meißner, F.-J., Schröder-Sura, A., Noguerol, A., & Molinié, M. (2012). *Le CARAP – Un Cadre de Référence pour les approches plurielles des langues et des cultures – Compétences et ressources*. Conseil de l'Europe. http://carap.ecml.at/.

Chalhoub-Deville, M. B. (2019). Multilingual testing constructs: Theoretical foundations. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 16*(4–5), 472–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1671391

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2021). *Pedagogical translanguaging*. Cambridge University Press.

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Multilingual education: Between language learning and translanguaging*. Cambridge University Press.

Coste, D., & Cavalli, M. (2015). *Education, mobility, otherness: The mediation functions of schools*. Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/education-mobility-otherness-the-mediation-functions-of-schools/16807367ee

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press. http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment Companion volume with new descriptors*. Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4

De Angelis, G. (2021). *Multilingual testing and assessment*. Multilingual Matters.

De Backer, F., Avermaet, P. V., & Slembrouck, S. (2017). Schools as laboratories for exploring multilingual assessment policies and practices. *Language and Education, 31*(3), 271–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1261896

Dendrinos, B. (2006). Mediation in communication, language teaching and testing. *Journal of Applied Linguistics, 22*, 9–35.

Dendrinos, B. (2009). Rationale and ideology of the KPG exams. *ELT News*. http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/kpg/kpgcorner_sep2009.htm.342

Dendrinos, B. (2013). Social meanings in global-glocal language proficiency exams. In D. Tsagari, S. Papadima-Sophocleous, & S. Ioannou-Georgiou (Eds.), *International experiences in language testing and assessment* (pp. 47–67). Peter Lang.

Dendrinos, B. (2014). Testing and teaching mediation. *Directions in English Language Teaching and Testing, 1.* https://rcel2.enl.uoa.gr/directions/issue1_1f.htm

Dendrinos, B. (2019). Multilingual Testing and Assessment for Plurilingual Education. "MultiTest" ECSPM position paper. https://ecspm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MultiTest.pdf

Dunlea, J., & Erickson, G. (2018). Pluricultural and plurilingual scales: Responses from the classroom and standardized testing. In European Association of Language Testing and Assessment (Ed.), *The CEFR Companion Volume with new descriptors: Uses and implications for language testing and assessment* (pp. 21–23). EALTA.

Gogolin, I. (1994). *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule.* Waxmann.

González-Davies, M. (2020). Developing mediation competence through translation. In S. Laviosa & M. González-Davies (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and education* (Vol. 4, pp. 434–450). Routledge.

Gorter, D., & Cenoz, J. (2017). Language education policy and multilingual assessment. *Language and Education, 31*(3), 231–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1261892

Gutiérrez Eugenio, E., & Saville, N. (2017). The role of assessment in European language policy: A historical overview. https://www.meits.org/policy-papers/paper/the-role-of-assessment-in-european-language-policy-a-historical-overview

Harsch, C., de la Caridad Collada Peña, I., Gutiérrez Baffil, T., Castro Álvarez, P., & García Fernández, I. (2019). Interpretation of the CEFR Companion Volume for developing rating scales in Cuban higher education. *CEFR Journal, 3,* 87–97. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTSIG.CEFR3-5

Haukås, Å. (2016). Teacher's beliefs about multilingualism and a multilingual pedagogical approach. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 13*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2015.1041960

Heyder, K. H., & Schädlich, B. (2014). Mehrsprachigkeit und Mehrkulturalität – eine Umfrage unter Fremdsprachenlehrkräften in Niedersachsen. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht, 19*(1), 183–201.

Hodkinson, A. (2010). Inclusive and special education in the English educational system: Historical perspectives, recent developments and future

challenges. *British Journal of Special Education, 37*(2), 61–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2010.00462.x

Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2014). English as a lingua franca. In A. Kunnan (Ed.), *The companion to language assessment* (pp. 1607–1616). Wiley Blackwell.

Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2017). Assessing English as a lingua franca. In E. Shohamy, I. Or, & S. May (Eds.), *Language testing and assessment* (Vol. 7) (3rd ed., pp. 103–117). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02261-1_7

Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2019). From mythical "standard" to standard reality: The need for alternatives to standardised English language tests. *Language Teaching, 52*(1), 86–110. https//:doi:10.1017/S0261444818000307

Karavas, E., & Mitsikopoulou, B. (Eds.). (2019). *Developments in glocal language testing: The case of the Greek national language proficiency exams (KPG).* Peter Lang.

Kirsch, C., & Duarte, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Multilingual approaches for teaching and learning. From acknowledging to capitalising on multilingualism in European mainstream education.* Routledge.

Lenz, P., & Berthele, R. (2010). *Prise en compte des competences plurilingues et interculturelles dans l'évaluation.* Reference Study. Council of Europe. http://doc.rero.ch/record/31422/files/Assessment2010_Lenz_Berthele_FR.pdf

Leung, C., Lewkowicz, J., & Jenkins, J. (2016). English for academic purposes: A need for remodeling. *Englishes in Practice, 3*(3), 55–73. https://doi.org/10.1515/eip-2016-0003

Liontou, M., & Braidwood, E. (2021). Mediation in practice in an ESAP course: Versions of the Medical English student conference. *CEFR Journal, 4,* 25–42. https://doi.org/10.37546/jaltsig.cefr4-2

Lopez, A. A., Sultan, T., & Guzman-Orth, D. (2017). Assessing multilingual competence. In E. Shohamy, I. Or, & S. May (Eds.), *Language testing and assessment* (Vol. 7) (3rd ed., pp. 91–102). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02261-1_6

Mannion, G. (2015). Towards glocal pedagogies: Some risks associated with education for global citizenship and how glocal pedagogies might avoid them. In J. Friedman, V. Haverkate, B. Oomen, E. Park, & M. Sklad (Eds.), *Going glocal in higher education: The theory, teaching and measurement of global citizenship* (pp. 19–34). University College Roosevelt.

Martyniuk, W. (2017). How to assess mediation. In E. G. Eugenio (Ed.), Learning and assessment: making the connections. *Proceedings of the ALTE 6th international conference,* Italy, 245–251. https://www.alte.org/resources/Documents/ALTE%202017%20Proceedings%20FINAL.pdf

Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Helmchen, C. (2022). Representations of mediation in edu-
cational settings: an explorative case-study with different stakeholders in
Hamburg. In B. North, E. Piccardo, T. Goodier, D. Fasoglio, R. Margonis,
& B. Rüschoff (Eds.), *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR
Companion Volume, examples from practice* (pp. 215–224). Council of Europe
Publishing.

Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Ollivier, C. (Eds.). (2023). *Assessment of plurilingual compe-
tence and plurilingual learners in educational settings*. Routledge.

Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Thölkes, M. (2022). "Wie soll ich das Kind bewerten?": Between
standardization and differentiation in the assessment of refugee students.
In G. S. Levine & D. Mallows (Eds.), *Language learning of migrants in
Europe: Theoretical, empirical, policy, and pedagogical issues*. Springer. https://
doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79237-4_10

Pavlovskaya, I., & Lankina, O. (2019). How new CEFR mediation descriptors
can help to assess the discussion skills of management students – Global and
analytical scales. *CEFR Journal, 1*, 33–40. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTSIG.
CEFR1-3

Piccardo, E. (2016). Plurilingualism: Vision, conceptualization, and practices.
In P. P. Trifonas & T. Aravossitas (Eds.), *Handbook of research and practice
in heritage language education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-
38893-9_47-1.

Piccardo, E., North, B., & Goodier, T. (2019). Broadening the scope of language
education: Mediation, plurilingualism, and collaborative learning: The CEFR
companion volume. *Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society, 15*(1), 17–
36. https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1612

Pizorn, K., & Huhta, A. (2017). Assessment in educational settings. In D. Tsagari
& J. Banerjee (Eds.), *Handbook of second language assessment* (pp. 239–254).
Walter de Gruyter.

Portolés, L., & Martí, O. (2018). Teachers' beliefs about multilingual pedago-
gies and the role of initial training. *International Journal of Multilingualism,
17*(2), 248–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2018.1515206

Saito, Y. (2019). Developing an e-portfolio reflecting the concept of mediation
for university students. *CEFR Journal, 3*, 104–115.https://doi.org/10.37546/
JALTSIG.CEFR3-7

Saville, N. (2019). How can multilingualism be supported through language edu-
cation in Europe? *Language Assessment Quarterly, 16*(4–5), 464–471. https://
doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1676246

Schissel, J. L., Leung, C., & Chalhoub-Deville, M. (2019). The construct of multi-lingualism in language testing. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *16*(4–5), 373–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1680679

Schissel, J. L., López-Gopar, M., Leung, C., & Morales, J. (2019). Classroom-based assessments in linguistically diverse communities: A case for collaborative research methodologies. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *16*(4–5), 393–407. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1678041

Shohamy, E. (2011). Assessing multilingual competencies: Adopting construct valid assessment policies. *Modern Language Journal*, *95*(3), 418–429. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01210.x

Shohamy, E., & Menken, K. (2015). Language assessment: Past to present misuses and future possibilities. In W. Wright, S. Boun, & O. García (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingual and multilingual education* (pp. 253–269). Wiley Blackwell.

Solly, M., & Esch, E. (Eds.). (2014). *Language education and the challenges of globalisation: Sociolinguistic issues.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Stathopoulou, M. (2013). Investigating mediation as translanguaging practice in a testing context: Towards the development of levelled mediation descriptors. In J. Colpaert, M. Simons, A. Aerts, & M. Oberhofer (Eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference* "Language testing in Europe: Time for a new framework?" (pp. 209–217). University of Antwerp.

Stathopoulou, M. (2015). *Cross-Language mediation in foreign language teaching and testing.* Multilingual Matters.

Stathopoulou, M. (2016). From "languaging" to "translanguaging": Reconsidering foreign language teaching and testing through a multilingual lens. *Selected Papers on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, *21*(0), 759–774. https://doi.org/10.26262/istal.v21i0.5267

Stathopoulou, M. (2018). Assessing learners' translingual literacy: From research to practice. In I. Katsillis (Ed.), *Confronting contemporary educational challenges through research: International conference on educational research – Proceedings* (pp. 440–449). University of Patras.

Stathopoulou, M. (2019). Assessing cross-language mediation in the Greek national multilingual exam suite: The role of test takers' language competence in strategy use. In E. Karavas & B. Mitsikopoulou (Eds.), *Developments in glocal language testing: The case of the Greek national language proficiency exams (KPG)* (pp. 243–269). Peter Lang.

Stathopoulou, M. (2020). The new CEFR descriptors for the assessment of written mediation: Exploring their applicability in an effort towards multilingual testing. *CEFR Journal*, *2*, 40–99. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTSIG.CEFR2-3

Stathopoulou, M. (2021). Teaching languages for specific purposes at universities: Using the CEFR Companion Volume to develop students' cross-lingual mediation skills. In *The CEFR Companion Volume – Impulses and Implications for Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education. Fremdsprachen und Hochschule (FuH)*, 96, 73–89.

Stathopoulou, M., Gauci, P., Liontou, M., & Melo-Pfeifer, S. (2023). *Mediation in teaching, learning & assessment (METLA): A teaching guide for language educators*. ECML, Council of Europe.

Swain, M., Kinnear, P., & Steinman, L. (2015). *Socio-cultural theory in second language education: An introduction through narratives* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Terzi, L. (2010). *Justice and equality in education*. Continuum.

Wall, D. (2012). Washback. In G. Fulcher & F. Davidson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language testing* (pp. 79–92). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203181287.ch5