

Le Multi-/plurilinguisme dynamique, terreau de l'excellence inclusive dans l'enseignement supérieur: MUDExI

ACTION 2: CASE STUDY ON LINGUISTIC MEDIATION IN HE¹

IN BRIEF

Knowing that social agents mediate differently in diverse social contexts, as mediation is socially situated communicative practice, this Case Study has attempted to investigate a particular social group's mediation practices. There is a critical need to fill the gap resulting from lack of data from ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies which would allow us to understand linguistic mediation practices in different situational contexts. Research, specifically, into how university students mediate intralinguistically (within the same language) and cross-linguistically (across different languages) has not been investigated before and it seemed important to understand the mediation practices they perform in their social milieu but especially in their academic setting. We wanted to know if their practices do not simply result in resolving communication gaps but, also, if give rise to cooperative and collaborative learning.

The Case Study on Linguistic Mediation in Higher Education was Action 2 of the MUDExI project and was carried out in two phases. During Phase 1, a survey was conducted through an online questionnaire to (a) establish the *multilingual profile* of a sample of 291 students from eight different academic institutions from Europe, South America and Africa, (b) discover what *type of mediation tasks* they perform for what communicative and educational purpose, on which occasions, how they perform them and what is required of them to be able to do so efficiently. During Phase 2 of the Case Study, a smaller sample of those who participated in the survey-questionnaire took part as junior researchers. They were asked to perform intra- and cross-linguistic mediation tasks with their peers, in the context of their university studies, and to prepare Verbal Protocols for each mediation instance they were involved in, so as to provide information regarding the type of task they performed in which situational context, how they performed it, and what was required of them to do so efficiently.

The findings from MUDExI-Action 2, Phase 1, are described in detail in the November 2023 Report which was a project deliverable. In summary, it is important to say that respondents from the project's partner institution universities² provided information about the languages they speak, where and how they use them, the mediation tasks they

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² The universities whose students responded to the survey-questionnaire are: Babes Bolyai University (UBB), National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) [ECSPM partner], Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski (SU), University of Strasbourg (UNISTRA), University for Foreigners of Siena (UNISTRASI) [ECSPM partner], University of São Paulo (USP), University of Lomé (UL), and University of Ngaoundéré (UN).

perform with their family, friends, community members and their university peers. One of the most interesting findings that is to be noted here is that the sample population of 291 university students speaks more than 50 languages; yet, about 70% of them identify themselves as monolingual and about 30% identify themselves as bilingual or trilingual. The languages they speak at home or in their community are not necessarily the same as the main language of the country in which they live, and the mediation tasks they perform with family, friends and community members are different from those they perform with their peers in the academic context. Finally, it is interesting to note that though there are some significant differences between how students use their linguistic repertoire. It largely depends on whether they are studying at a university whose official language is the same as the country/community in which they live, or the official language of their institution is the same as the official language of the country/community/home they live in. It also depends on whether they are international or home students and on whether they are students of language(s) or in other areas of study.

The findings from Phase 2 of MUDEXI-Action 2 are described in detail in the January 2024 Report which was also a project deliverable. It involved 15 university students acting as junior researchers from the Universities of Strasbourg, Babes Bolyai University, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens and of the University for Foreigners of Siena, who produced 114 Verbal Protocols giving detailed accounts (in either English or French) of their intra- and cross-linguistic mediation instances which they initiated. What became clear from this phase of the action is that mediation mobilised students to use their linguistic repertoire in their academic context, to become aware of the social meaning of their practices and to use their mediation practices for peer learning exchange of knowledge production and transmission.

Analysis of the data collected revealed the ways in which this particular social group performs mediation tasks, and how they (pluri)language meanings with the different languages that they know, the languages they use at university – not only the official language of the university but also languages they are learning as part of their studies and languages they use with their peers for their work and socialising in the academic context. They do not use these languages separately but mix them in communication, as they are involved in genuine translanguaging practices with the various languages they have in their repertoires.

In conclusion, there are several interesting implications of this Case Study, which investigated the mediation practices of university students for the purpose of peer learning, the most significant of which is that their intra- and cross-linguistic mediation practices involve them in: teamwork in a (multilingual) learning community; critical enquiry, reflection and plurilingual exchange; managing and (re)constructing knowledge; managing plurilingual learning and how to learn.

The results of the MUDEXI Case Study, Phase 1 have already been presented at the ANIME (Academic Network for Inclusiveness, Multilingualism and Excellence) conference which took place at the University of Sofia in November 2023, as well as at a forum organised by the Research Institute for Multilingualism and Language Policy of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The results of the Case Study, Phase 1 & 2 were presented at the annual conference of ICC (the International Language Association) which took place in April 2024 and it will also be presented to the research unit of the DLCM of the Sapienza Università di Roma in October 2024.