

Bridging the gap: Mediation processes in the German L2 Spanish L1 higher-education classroom

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Abstract

The inclusion of the new mediation scales in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has fostered the role of second-language (L2) learners as multi-lingual social agents performing mediation activities that can build bridges between distant entities. However, even though mediation has become a fashionable topic in scholarly debate, there are still very few studies based on empirical evidence that support the theory. This study provides an empirical approach to mediation processes in the L2 classroom, more specifically in a context with Spanish-speaking first-language (L1) students enrolled in a German course in a Colombian university. The mediation processes are analyzed during two activities in which the students had to interact to fulfill the task. The aim of the study is twofold: (1) to measure the proportion of the types of mediation acts used in each activity; and (2) to provide specific examples of the strategies deployed in the mediation acts. The quantitative analysis confirms the presence of three types of mediation proposed by the CEFR – linguistic, communicative and cognitive – but records a low proportion of mediations performed in the L2, which reflects the difficulty associated with cognitively demanding tasks.

KEYWORDS: COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE (CEFR); CONVERSATION ANALYSIS; DEUTSCH ALS FREMDSPRACHE (DAF); MEDIATION SKILLS; SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION; SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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1 Introduction

The development of intercultural competence² during higher education is today seen as pivotal to ensuring that university graduates achieve access to the professional world (Zorina *et al.* 2014). In particular, multilingualism is regarded a competitive advantage, both for company workers and for independent professionals (Tziora *et al.* 2016), and in many countries multilingual ability is encouraged to help students meet the expectations of globalized markets (McHenry 2020). In many universities, it is seen as a priority to educate students to see themselves as members of international, multilingual societies. In the field of Second Language Teaching, the publication of the Council of Europe's new edition of the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Companion Volume* in 2020 has been key to designing and updating study plans.³ This updates and extends the CEFR as described in the previous 2018 edition by adding descriptors for mediation, online interaction and plurilingual/pluricultural competence.

Mediation is concerned with the development of the social and communicative functions of language, and gives students more agency in their own learning (North and Piccardo 2022). As a result, it touches directly on the conditions needed for the co-construction of new meaning resulting from 'the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of our societies' (Council of Europe 2020: 13). In this article, we provide an empirical approach to mediation processes taking place in a German L2 classroom involving Colombian Spanish speakers. Although there has been a growing interest in analyzing mediation processes in L2 (Piccardo and North 2019), there is still a palpable need for empirical studies covering languages other than English. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods employed for the present analysis aims to contribute to the current debate on the topic and offers data for L2 teachers to broaden their understanding of how mediation works in the classroom.

The article is structured as follows. The next section (Section 2) is a literature review, where studies dealing with the concepts of mediation and peer interaction are discussed. In Section 3, the data and methodology of the study are explained. This section includes an explanation of the didactic material and the task activities that were carried out, as well as of the sample, the analytical approach and the hypotheses of the study. Section 4 is devoted to the data analysis, opening with a quantitative analysis which is then complemented with a qualitative analysis. This is followed by a general discussion of the findings and the conclusions of the study (Section 5).

2 Literature Review

Mediation, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe 2020), is one of the competences that should be addressed in foreign language teaching (North

and Piccardo 2016: 9). There are many everyday situations in which mediation may be required, when a speaker is not able to understand a discourse due to linguistic, cultural or conceptual barriers. In the business world, for instance, mediation may be used to clarify specific information in business letters, calls with clients or recruiting processes. Similarly, intercultural communication involved in international business operations may require mediation during a business meeting, a project or a guided visit organized for prospective clients or business partners. The same rationale applies to other fields, for example, tourism, the arts, politics and science, to name just a few. To cover such a wide array of situations, three types of mediation are established by the CEFR, with distinct evaluation scales and descriptors:

1. *Linguistic or textual mediation*. This is related to the transfer of information from a text to another person who does not have access to the content of that text (North and Piccardo 2016: 28). It involves activities such as transmitting information, clarifying, summarizing and translating (Council of Europe 2020: 176).
2. *Cognitive or conceptual mediation*. In this type of mediation, language serves as a vehicle for the collaborative construction of knowledge. It is a substantial component of the teamworking skills required for the development of group projects, where concepts must be explained, ideas proposed and solutions agreed (North and Piccardo 2016: 29). This type of mediation facilitates access to knowledge (Council of Europe 2020: 176).
3. *Communicative mediation*. This consists of solving conflicts caused by sociocultural differences which might arise from different points of view or cultural barriers (Council of Europe 2020: 117) and it may be found, for instance, when students transfer the message or instruction transmitted by the teacher.

Mediation processes can be carried out intralinguistically, as reformulations in the L2, or interlinguistically, if the speaker's L1 or a third language is used to help the interlocutor understand the information ('interlanguage' – cf. Selinker 1972; Selinker and Douglas 1985). Whereas native speakers might be monolingual, L2 speakers are always multilingual. Consequently, they might be in a better position to mediate – that is, to help a third party access information and negotiate meaning with them. When performing a mediation activity, L2 speakers may also need to make active use of all the other competences usually associated with language learning: reception, production and interaction (De Arriba García and Cantero Serna 2004: 12).

2.1 Mediation and the L2 classroom

The L2 classroom can become a scenario that enhances the social dimension in language (Swain *et al.* 2015: 151), when traditional methods focused on transmitting a code and correcting errors is replaced by an ‘action-oriented approach’ (Piccardo 2014: 9), in which students become protagonists of their own learning experience through interaction:

Language learning follows dynamic, iterative, contextually and socially driven paths. Mediation takes a crucial role with its capacity to enable and support the user / learner as a social agent in their development processes. (Piccardo *et al.* 2019: 20)

Collaborative activities among peers constitute a favorable setting for training students as mediators in informal situations, both in linguistic and social dimensions (Swain and Watanabe 2013). When mediation is focused, students may see for themselves the need to collaborate in a task.

Group work is considered key in the development of competencies in action-oriented L2 teaching methodologies built around content and tasks such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL – Dalton-Puffer 2007; Bentley 2010; Pastrana *et al.* 2018) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT – Nunan 2004; Estaire 2009; East 2021), and there is a growing body of literature that validates the benefits of these methodologies in the L2 classroom (Russel and Spada 2006; Cheng and Samuel 2011; Córdoba Zúñiga 2016; East 2017; Waluyo 2019; Lambert and Oliver 2020; Nhem 2020) and that support the view that L2 speakers build on their L2 knowledge from peer interaction. The input they receive is adapted to their needs in something like an interlanguage (Selinker 1972), and it usually combines very well with the development of mediation.

Mediation can also help reduce negative emotions tied to the process of language learning. Foreign language-learning anxiety is a familiar phenomenon for both L2 students and teachers (Horwitz *et al.* 1986; Sila 2010; Djafri and Wimbari 2018; Asyfyfa *et al.* 2019; Oflaz 2019; Tóth 2019); reluctance to use the L2 is usually caused by students’ embarrassment over committing mistakes and even shame at articulating words. Negative feelings like fear and anger put foreign language learners’ motivation at stake (Chun and Benesch 2014); however, motivations for foreign-language learning are also emotionally driven, and so all efforts should be made to ensure that the learning process is as smooth as possible. In this sense, feedback from other students may generate less anxiety than, for instance, interaction with the teacher.

However, peer interaction has its limitations, especially in non-immersion contexts, where learners have fewer opportunities to engage with the target language (Collentine 2004; Fujii and Mackey 2009; Philp and Tognini 2009; Foster *et al.* 2014; Yu *et al.* 2020). In these contexts, only the most partici-

pative learners benefit from interactions, both for their production and for corrective feedback. For many students, correction from their peers may be a barrier, as they fear their face might be threatened and so they consciously refuse to participate. Similarly, it has been pointed out that while L1 use may be beneficial in the social and cognitive spheres, it may eventually lessen L2 production (Swain and Lapkin 2000; Tognini and Oliver 2012; García Mayo and Hidalgo 2017). In this sense, guidance from instructors becomes essential to ensuring students' participation (Fujii *et al.* 2016: 66). Despite these limitations, however, peer-interaction activities, typically associated with student-centered approaches (Wicke 2012), are considered an ideal setting for implementing cognitive mediation (Council of Europe 2020: 119). When mediation is enhanced, learners become intermediaries of the instructions provided by the teacher.

In what follows, we provide an empirical approach to the mediation processes that arise from peer interaction during the performance of two activities developed in German as a Foreign Language classes (DaF, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*). Although the main function of the tasks is not to promote the natural use of the language in situations that could take place outside the classroom (controlled practice activity vs. communicative activity), performing them collaboratively in small groups allows students to practice their mediating skills in a natural way.

3 Data and methodology

3.1 Didactic material and task activities

The teaching material was concerned with a specific task: to create, save and print envelopes needed for business communication. The material was taken from the Microsoft Office technical support page, which explains step by step the function of 'Create, save and print envelopes' in German.⁴ To minimize language-level limitations, these instructions were adjusted to a B1 level: non-essential information was eliminated to simplify the text and a glossary was offered as aid (cf. Bentley 2010: 69–70).

In the first task, students received the set of nine steps needed to carry out the task in random order. Each step consisted of an utterance with a gap in which an article or demonstrative pronoun was missing. To complete the task, the students had to choose what word would fit the contexts and then to decline the article or pronoun, considering purely linguistic concepts like gender, number and case. Then, in the second task, the students were asked to order the series of steps. To complete this task, the same set of steps was presented randomly in a table with rows numbered from 1 to 9, which also contained an image associated with each instruction.

These were controlled activities (cf. Cortés Moreno 2000: 52) that were adapted to B1.1 (low intermediate) level. We took account that B1.1 speakers still have limitations in their understanding and production of specific morpho-syntactic and semantic content, and for this reason group work was envisaged as a strategy to promote the negotiation of meaning and the accomplishment of the task. By exchanging information in peer groups, the students were free to speak, and they received constant feedback. Instead of fostering a teacher-centered system, this task followed the recommendations of the communicative approach (cf. Wicke 2012). The students were repeatedly instructed to use the L2 for their interactions, both at the beginning of each task and during the process.

3.2 Sample

For each of the two tasks, the oral interactions of eight pairs of L2 learners as they were engaged in the activity were analyzed. The students were enrolled on a Modern Languages program offered at the EAN University (Colombia). They were all native speakers of Spanish, and as part of their study program they had completed four German courses (360 hours) and had passed the final level of German as a Foreign Language. As a result, their L2 level at the time of the exercise was B1.1. The class was held online using Microsoft Teams. The students interacted through the platform, using a videocall. Additionally, they were allowed to share their computer screens to work on the didactic material together. All participants were invited to read and sign an informed consent to take part in this activity. The average duration for the interaction was 17 mins for the first activity, and 26 mins for the second. The audio files were transcribed manually to ensure code switching and that the exact way L2 was produced by the participants in the L2 was accurately represented. The interactions were coded following the system used by Grupo Val.Es.Co (2014).⁵ Activity 1 had an average of 62.86 turns, the average for Activity 2 was 90.43 turns.

3.3 Analytical approach

To carry out the analysis, acts were taken as units of measurement. These units are ‘hierarchically inferior to the turn, of which they are its immediate constituents’, and they are defined as ‘minimum units of action and intention’, containing the properties of isolability and identifiability (Grupo Val.Es.Co 2014: 37, translated). We also understand that each act contains a certain degree of illocutionary force (e.g., question, answer, rejection, disagreement, justification, etc.), but at the same time it is possible to identify it as an act that serves mediation purposes according to available scales and descriptors (Council of Europe 2018). The transcribed recordings were segmented into acts, then coded (‘mediation’, ‘other category’). The mediation acts were also coded according to typology (‘linguistic’, ‘cognitive’ or ‘communicative’).

3.4 Hypotheses

Two activities based on the same didactic material were put into practice in a B1 German class (see Appendix 1). They had two different objectives: Activity 1 presented a fill-in-the-gaps exercise in which the students had to complete a text with articles and correctly decline demonstrative pronouns, whereas in Activity 2 the students had to order a sequence of instructions. Both activities were carried out in pairs, so that the students could ask each other about the meaning of unknown words and the pertinence of grammatical structures, or even verify that they had understood instructions correctly.

The interaction in pairs aimed at eliciting linguistic, communicative and cognitive mediation. The application of different registers and language functions necessary for the negotiation of meaning in the activities especially was considered (Fujii *et al.* 2016: 64; Pastrana *et al.* 2018: 68). Hence our first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Peer interaction involved in the development of both controlled practice activities will be carried out mainly through mediation processes. There will not be a significant difference between the proportion of conversational acts (Grupo Val.Es.Co 2014) intended for mediation processes in both activities (H1: mediation Activity 1 = mediation Activity 2).

However, a different type of mediation is expected to predominate in each activity, because of the objectives set for each of them: in the first activity, the students read instructions for the first time, and they tried to decode them together by transferring the meaning conveyed in each instruction. This activity should elicit almost exclusively linguistic mediation, both grammatically and lexically. The second activity relied predominantly on cognitive mediation, where the students were supposed to use language to accommodate their knowledge with the aim of reaching new ideas and conclusions (Dalton-Puffer 2007: 67; Swain and Watanabe 2013). The following hypotheses are proposed:

H2 and H3: Due to the different objectives, in Activity 1 the linguistic mediation will predominate (H2: linguistic mediation Activity 1 > linguistic mediation Activity 2), while in Activity 2 the proportion of cognitive mediation will significantly increase (H3 cognitive mediation Activity 1 < cognitive mediation Activity 2).

Considering that this study was formulated in a non-immersion context, it is likely that the students may resort frequently to code switching (King and Chetty 2014) and that a large part of the mediations will be done in the L1 (Swain and Lapkin 2000). As translation is not considered a strategy in cognitive mediation (Council of Europe 2020: 117) and this type of mediation is expected to be predominant in Activity 2, a fourth hypothesis (H4) is formulated:

H4: As a consequence of H3, a higher proportion of interaction is expected to be carried out in the L2 to complete the mediation processes involved in the development of Activity 2. In Activity 1, the students will predominantly use translation as a strategy to carry out linguistic mediation (cf. De Arriba García and Cantero Serna 2004) (H4: mediation in L2 Activity 1 < mediation in L2 Activity 2).

The verification of these four hypotheses is combined with a qualitative analysis to determine the main strategies involved in each type of mediation.

4 Data analysis

In this section we analyze the spontaneous mediation processes that arise from the interaction between peers during the performance of two tasks in a DaF class. First, a quantitative analysis aimed at verifying the four hypotheses formulated is presented: the results confirm most of our expectations, but they also reveal unexpectedly low L2 use (Section 4.1). Subsequently, the qualitative analysis of the strategies involved in each type of mediation confirms that the mediation activities are natural processes for L2 speakers (Section 4.2).

4.1 Quantitative analysis and hypothesis testing

The total number of speech acts used for mediation processes and for other functions is provided in Table 1. Based on this data, our first hypothesis (H1: mediation Activity 1 = mediation Activity 2) must be rejected, since the proportion of the mediation processes is significantly higher in the first activity (91.05%) compared to the second (82.96%). Of the total number of acts produced in each activity, more than 80% in both cases were used for mediation processes. The students explained the meaning of the words and instructions to clarify grammatical content, and they tried to contribute to fulfill common objectives, either by organizing the work process or by providing content ideas (Council of Europe 2020: 105). In the second activity, the percentage of 'other non-mediating functions' increased to 17.04% (compared to 9.72% in activity 1). This difference could be motivated by the longer duration of the second activity, which may have given rise to a greater variety of communicative functions.

Table 1: Mediation and non-mediation acts

	Mediation		Non-mediation	
	N	%	N	%
Activity 1	587	91.05	61	9.72
Activity 2	954	82.96	195	17.04
p value	$p < 0.001$		$p < 0.001$	

The breakdown of different types of mediation in both activities is provided in Table 2. According to this data, Hypothesis 2 can be accepted (H2: linguistic mediation Activity 1 > linguistic mediation Activity 2), since the proportion of linguistic mediation is higher in Activity 1 (51.11 %) with respect to the proportion in linguistic mediation in Activity 2 (31%) (cf. North and Piccardo 2016: 28). Even though the hypothesis could be verified, it was expected that linguistic mediation would no longer be used in Activity 2. In a way, the first activity was thought to be an enabling task for the development of the second one ('tarea posibilitadora' – Instituto Cervantes, n.d.). However, the results seem to indicate that matters of both form and meaning can surface in all kinds of interactions or activities.

Table 2: Mediation activities in Activities 1 and 2 (to check the statistical significance of the differences, *p* values were calculated from hypothesis tests based on the *z* statistic – Dickinson Gibbons and Chakraborti 2011; Díez *et al.* 2019)

	Linguistic mediation				Cognitive		Communicative	
	Grammatical		Lexical		mediation		mediation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Activity 1	169	29	131	22	279	48	8	1
Activity 2	28	3	272	29	643	67	11	1
<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> < 0.001		<i>p</i> < 0.001		<i>p</i> < 0.001		<i>p</i> = 0.717	

The distribution of different types of mediation differed in both activities: in the first activity, 29% of the mediations were intended to solve grammatical issues, as in Example 1,⁶ while in the second activity the proportion is reduced to 3%. The trend is reversed in the case of lexical mediation, and the second activity registered a higher number of mediation acts that aimed at clarifying lexical aspects, as in Example 2.

Example 1

- 1 S1: *Wenn Sie dies ... Umschlag es der?*
If you this ... envelope is masculine?
- 2 S2: *Umschlag, der Umschlag*
Envelope, the envelope (masculine article)

Example 2

- 1 S2: *Unten es abajo me sale*
Unten means under. That's what I got

- 2 S1 ¿Abajo?
Under?
- 3 S1: Pues aquí debajo de la casilla
So here under the box
- 4 Y *Absender* dice que es remitente, entonces es la dirección del remitente
And *Absender* is sender according to this, so it must be the sender's
address
Sí porque la siguiente ya habla es de *zum Dokument hinzufügen*
Yes, because the next one is already about add to document

This asymmetric distribution of linguistic mediation may be explained by the different objectives of the activities: the students in Activity 1 focused on analyzing the grammatical forms to solve the specific objective of the task. They were not concerned with a deep understanding of the entire sequence of instructions. Because of this, lexical mediation was still a necessary step in Activity 2.

Our data analysis also allowed us to confirm Hypothesis 3 (H3: cognitive mediation Activity 1 < cognitive mediation Activity 2). Cognitive mediation in Activity 2 (67%) increased by 40.30% compared to Activity 1 (48%), due to the change in instruction and the objective pursued in each case: whereas in Activity 1 the first reading allowed students to obtain a basic understanding of the instructions, during Activity 2 their mediation effort focused on deciding the logical order of the instructions. Decision making in Activity 1 could only be derived from linguistic mediation, whereas cognitive mediation in Activity 2 relates to collaborative work among peers (Swain and Watanabe 2013; Council of Europe 2020: 117). In this activity, decision making outreached the linguistic form and required content negotiation motivated by the text and the students' world knowledge (for instance, their knowledge of the MS Word package). When performing cognitive mediation, the students seek to facilitate interaction and contribute to the common construction of meaning (North and Piccardo 2016: 29). This, in turn, can be put into practice using regulatory, relational mediation, as in Example 3, or resorting to instructional, cognitive mediation, as in Example 4.

Example 3

- 1 S1: Pues copiemos esa
Then let's copy that one
- 2 S2: *Dann machen wir die nächste*
Let's do the next one

Example 4

- 1 S1: *Das ist ein Umschlag für einen Empfänger*
That is the envelope for the addressee
- 2 S2: *Wir haben aber hier Absenderadresse*
But we have here the sender's address

While in Example 3, S1 fulfilled an organizational role, and tried to encourage action, in Example 4 the students exchanged knowledge on where they could extract information to carry out the task.

Finally, communicative mediation is minimally represented, with only eight acts in the first activity and 11 in the second. This type of mediation only took place to help students understand the instruction that was transmitted by the teacher (Council of Europe 2020: 117): either the students transmitted the instructions at the beginning or at some later point during the development of the activity as a recapitulation, as in Example 5, or the information was reinterpreted when the teacher asked for information while the task was being performed, as in Example 6.

Example 5

- 1 S1: Es que ella dijo que debíamos poner solo ... no sé qué le entendí.
But she said that we only had to put ... I don't know what I understood
- 2 S2: Sí ella dijo que debíamos poner el *diesen* acompañado de sustantivo, y ahí sería artículo, o que podía volverse el sustantivo, entonces ahí iría solo
Yes she said we had to put *diesen* next to a noun, and it would be an article, or it might turn into a noun, then it would be alone

Example 6

- 1 S1: No entendí qué dijo
I didn't understand what she said
- 2 S2: Que si alguien lo podía mostrar ya o algo así
If someone could show it already or something

There were very few observations of communicative mediation. As a result, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, and it is not possible to find significant differences in the amount of communicative mediation involved in Activities 1 and 2.

To verify Hypothesis 4 (H4: mediation in L2 Activity 1 < mediation in L2 Activity 2), the amount of L2 language used in the development of the activities was measured. The results are provided in Table 3, which shows the number of conversational acts produced in the students' native and target languages

during the activities. The total number of acts produced in L2 was 17.44% for Activity 1 and 10.78% for Activity 2. Following this, the last of the proposed hypotheses should be rejected: the expected impact of cognitive mediation did not generate an increase in the use of the L2 in the second activity. The same trend was observed in the case of the acts that did not seek mediation, as 21.31% of the acts in Activity 1 were performed in the L2, as compared to 7.14% in Activity 2.

Table 3: Acts and L1/L2 use

	Mediation				Non-mediation			
	in L1		in L2		in L1		in L2	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Activity 1	487	82.56	100	17.44	48	78.69	13	21.31
Activity 2	845	89.22	109	10.78	181	92.86	14	7.14
p value	$p < 0.001$				$p = 0.003$			

The generalized low proportion of L2 use can be justified by the difficulty that arises in non-immersion classes (Fujii and Mackey 2009; Philp and Tognini 2009) and the facilitating role of L1 during the interaction for the fulfillment of the objectives in the activity (Swain and Lapkin 2000; García Mayo and Hidalgo 2017). Thus, on the one hand, the easier tasks related to the application of grammatical knowledge, such as the one proposed in Activity 1, seem to enable a higher production in the L2. On the other hand, the cognitively demanding exercises requiring constant meaning negotiation resulted in participants using the L2 less. Thus, the practice and evaluation of cognitive mediation seems to constitute a challenge in non-immersion learning contexts, as this is the only type of mediation that does not include an interlinguistic option (Council of Europe 2020: 119–121).

4.2 Qualitative analysis and descriptor application

In this section, the main conversational strategies involved in the mediation processes are exemplified and discussed. In linguistic mediation, a distinction can be made between explanations related to grammatical issues and those associated with the lexicon when meanings of the original text are transmitted. In grammatical mediation, five mediation strategies are observed: ‘gender’, ‘case’, ‘number’, ‘referent’ and ‘structure’.

The strategies applied as part of grammatical mediation processes served to overcome the lack of equivalence between the L1 and the L2. Hence, in Example 7 S2 wanted to verify the word gender by repeating the word and including a feminine article (*die*).

Example 7

- 1 S2: *Option ist die Option*
Option is the option (feminine article)

In Example 8, the speaker asked openly for help to obtain information about number. These topics ('gender' and 'number') are troublesome for lower-level L1 Spanish / L2 German speakers because of the lack of linguistic equivalence.

Example 8

- 1 S2: *Das ist Plural oder Singular?*
Is that singular or plural?
- 2 S1: *Das ist Femenin, Singular*
It is feminine, singular

Conversely, identifying the referent, as in Example 9, and building simple phrase structures, as in Example 10, were not problematic and were consequently frequent in the corpus.

Example 9

- 1 S1: *Der Demonstrativartikel ist für Weglassen?*
The demonstrative article refers to Weglassen?
- 2 S2: *Für Kontrollkästchen*
For check box

Example 10

- 1 S2: *Ay, aquí sí toca con pronombre porque no hay sustantivo*
Ok, here we need a pronoun because there is no noun
- 2 S1: *Es que estos son como los incisos en español y la estructura es con estos*
These are like comments in Spanish and the structure is with those
- 3 S2: *Ah, ¿eso es Relativpronombre?*
Ah, is that 'relativepronoun'

Regarding lexical mediation, almost all instances involved oral translations from the L2 into Spanish, as in Example 11.

Example 11

- 1 S2: *Ah, sería como cuando usted el texto de la dirección del destinatario formatearlo quiere, cuando usted quiera formatear el texto de la dirección del destinatario, márkelo y dele click con el botón derecho*

Oh, it would be like you the text of the sender's address format want, when you want to format the text of the sender's address, select it and click with the right button

The use of etymological roots, though marginally, was also found in the observations, as in Example 12.

Example 12

- 1 S1: No sé qué es *Schriftart*
I don't know what *Schriftart* [font] is
- 2 S2: Algo de escribir será, porque *Schrift*
It must be related to writing because *Schrift* [writing, letter]

Translations provided orally are highly informal, and they usually contain a high degree of reformulation (from a more literal version to a more natural version). They seek to convey a general meaning that serves as a previous step to cognitive mediation. Therefore, the aspects that differentiate professional translation from mediation are met (Königs 2015: 36). Communicative mediation was carried out mainly through translations, as in Example 13, although in some cases it entailed intralinguistic reformulation, as in Example 14.

Example 13

- 1 S2: Preguntó que cómo vamos, cuánto nos falta
She asked how we are doing, how much time we need

Example 14

- 2 S1: *Wir müssen organisieren die erste Punkte oder die zweite Punkte, das habe ich verstanden*
We must organize the first point or the second point, that's what I understood

Finally, cognitive mediation can be observed by applying two scales (North and Piccardo 2016: 29): (1) turns in which the learner tries to facilitate interaction (facilitating interaction in a group) by establishing basic conditions to achieve common objectives (relational mediation); and (2) turns aimed at the collaborative construction of meaning (co-construction of meaning), in which the academic content is thematized (Dalton-Puffer 2007: 67; Swain and Watanabe 2013). Thus in Example 15, it is possible to notice S1's intention to facilitate the interaction by organizing the activities necessary to carry the activity.

Example 15

- 1 S1: Comparte el documento
Share the document

In cases like this, the suggestion ('to share the document') may appear as an initiative proposed by the speaker. It can also be a reaction to a classmate's suggestion, as in Example 16, where S2 prompts strategic thinking, or it can encourage continuing with the activity when one of the steps was completed, as in Example 17.

Example 16

- 1 S1: Hagamos las otras y dejemos este para lo último, ¿no?
Let's do the others and save this one for last, right?
- 2 S2: Es que deberíamos encontrar primero el inicio de todo.
But I think we should first find the beginning

Example 17

- 1 S1: Listo ¿y ahora el último párrafo qué dice?
Ready and now the last paragraph, what does it say?

Examples 18–22 provide evidence of the co-construction of meaning that results from cognitive mediation. In Example 18, the co-construction of meaning is achieved by offering evidence to guide the resolution of the activity.

Example 18

- 1 S1: En la siguiente imagen que está acá chiquita, ahí es como que se le puede cambiar ... porque está como en negrilla Fuente ... o sea, que está como para cambiarle el tamaño de la letra ... en la dirección ¿será?
In the next image, this little one here, it looks like it can be changed ... because it is like a bold font ... that is, it is like you can change the font size ... in the direction, will it be?

The speakers may also try to offer a justification for their choices, as in Example 19, or make a proposal, as in Example 20.

Example 19

- 1 S1: *Nein, ich glaube, das ist falsch.*
No, I think, that is wrong

- 2 S2: ¿Por qué?
Why?
- 3 S1: Porque no tiene ni el que envía ni el que recibe
Because it doesn't have either the one who sends or the one who receives

Example 20

- 1 S2: Esa vendría a ser la k b, o sea, la última
This would be the k b, that is, the last one
- 2 S1: Me imagino que es esta
I think this is the one

The co-construction of meaning could also be expressed by disagreeing with previous discourse, as in Example 21, or by a direct question to seek confirmation, like in Example 22.

Example 21

- 1 S2: No, pero esta es la misma que ya puse allá
No, but this is the same that I already put there
- 2 S1: No, pero es diferente, el principio creo
No, but it is different, the beginning I think

Example 22

- 1 S2: Nummer 2. Was denkst du?
Number 2. What do you think?
- 2 S1: Ja, kann sein, aber auch Nummer h, oder Buchstabe h?
Yes, it can be, but also number h, letter h?

As discussed previously, the proportion of cognitive mediation in the L2 found in this analysis is low. This complicated the verification of the cognitive mediation descriptors applied for collaboration in groups. Non-immersion constitutes a challenge for the implementation of this type of mediation, even though students could probably fulfill all the descriptors proposed for B1 level (Council of Europe 2020: 119): 'can collaborate on a shared task, for example formulating and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches'. All the strategies presented in Table 3 were performed in the L2. None was more prevalent than the other, so it is likely that the use of a foreign language is due to the students' predisposition rather than triggered by the activity.

5 Discussion and conclusions

This article constitutes an empirical approach to mediation processes in the German as a Foreign Language classroom. The two activities carried out for this study turned out to be favorable scenarios that naturally promoted all the types of mediation included in the CEFR. Our data analysis showed that most exchanges (< 80%) involved some type of mediation processes and that, indeed, all three types of mediation (linguistic, cognitive and communicative) were found in the dataset.

The quantitative analysis allowed us to determine some differences in the performance of both activities concerning the predominant type of mediation and the proportion of L2 used in the interaction. Activity 1, which revolved around the resolution of grammar-related problems, led to a mostly linguistic or textual mediation (De Arriba García and Cantero Serna 2004), while Activity 2, which compelled students to order a set of steps, implied mainly cognitive mediation processes. Regarding the presence of the L2, Activity 1 seems to have facilitated the execution of acts of mediation in L2, probably because the task was easier. In Activity 2, we expected to find higher percentages of L2 use, as the activity was designed to elicit cognitive mediation processes, in which translation is not an expectable strategy according to the CEFR description. However, the L1 predominated in Activity 2. Again, the cognitive effort triggered by each type of activity may have tipped the scale. The low presence of conversational acts produced in the L2 hindered the analysis of cognitive mediation according to the CEFR descriptors (Council of Europe 2020: 119). The effort involved in this type of mediation may be considered a challenge in a non-immersion context, since cognitive mediation cannot be carried out through translation/interpretation processes.

One of the main findings of this study is that the students rely on their linguistic repertoire, the L1 in this case, to make meaning, mediate and fulfill the task with peers, even if they were encouraged to use the L2. The use of the L1 can be seen as a strategy to create a bridge between the original and the new messages that benefits the recipient of the mediation. The L1 is used not to help meet the shortfalls of L2 competence, but rather to fulfill a function: when the students understand the goal of the activity, they immediately recognize the L2 as a medium to achieve their aim and feel free to complement their knowledge in the L2 with their L1 knowledge to ensure the success of the mediation. The development of the mediation competence can open the door for the consideration of multilingualism and translanguaging in the L2 classroom as a positive reality fostering L2 acquisition (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Canagarajah 2011; Lewis *et al.* 2012; Liu 2020).

This study adopts an empirical approach that should be expanded with a larger data sample and different activities adapted to the type of mediation. In general, there is still a gap in the study of mediation processes in the L2 German classroom, and more empirical evidence is needed to validate the promising results here presented focusing on different skills, strategies, didactic materials and learning settings.

Notes

1. This work has been prepared through the close cooperation of both authors. However, Laura Nadal has mainly written Sections 1, 2 and 3, and Iria Bello is responsible for Sections 4 and 5.
2. The development of competencies – that is, abilities to do things in the L2 – has been a long-standing debate in Second Language Acquisition and has motivated the creation of different methodologies for teaching foreign languages. We share with Gorter and Cenoz (2018) and Tavakoli and Jones (2018) the opinion that we need to adopt a holistic approach to the development of language competencies. This includes the need to understand language as a system governed by a set of universal rules ('linguistic competence', cf. Chomsky 1965), the ability to adapt language use to different social and communicative settings ('communicative competence', cf. Hymes 1974, 1987; Canale and Swain 1980) and the ability to do things and manage social interactions ('transactional and interactional competence', cf. e.g., Kramersch 1986 and Brown and Levinson 1987), as well as the ability to adapt one's linguistic repertoire to the communication challenges of multilingual societies, including the development of personal identity as a speaker of the L2 ('translingual and symbolic competence', cf. Byram 1997, Kramersch 2006).
3. The main objective of the CEFR is to provide a framework that facilitates the homogenization of educational reform projects in different settings in Europe and beyond (Council of Europe 2001; Jones and Saville 2009; Byram and Parmenter 2012; Nishimura-Sahi 2023). It is now a widely recognized system with a series of proficiency scales that are designed to measure speakers' abilities to perform communicative tasks in six reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2). The first version (Council of Europe 2001) developed the so-called communicative competence (Hymes 1967) and involved four dimensions: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competence (Canale and Swain 1980) that were correlated with four kinds of language activities: reception (listening and reading) and production (spoken and written).
4. <https://support.microsoft.com/de-de/office/erstellen-und-drucken-eines-einzelnen-umschlags-b766aa84-5b97-4f63-b03f-451d2fb3640f?ui=de-de&rs=de-de&ad=de> ('Erstellen und Drucken eines einzelnen Umschlags').

5. In this system of conversation analysis units, a turn corresponds to the contribution that is made by one interlocutor that is taken into account by the other interlocutors and that, therefore, contributes to the thematic development of the conversation. Each turn can be divided into smaller units, the first of which in the order of hierarchy is the act. An act corresponds to a speech act (Grupo Val.Es.Co 2014).
6. All examples were taken from the corpus built with the students' contributions. The students' L1 (Spanish) was considered the default language and contributions in this language are rendered in standard font. Italics are used to indicate L2 (German) use. The English translations provided after each example do not take the L1/L2 into consideration. They are idiomatic translations that aim at facilitating readers' comprehension.
7. To check the statistical significance of the differences, *p* values were calculated from hypothesis tests based on the *z* statistic (Dickinson Gibbons and Chakraborti 2011; Díez *et al.* 2019).

Appendix 1: Activity 1

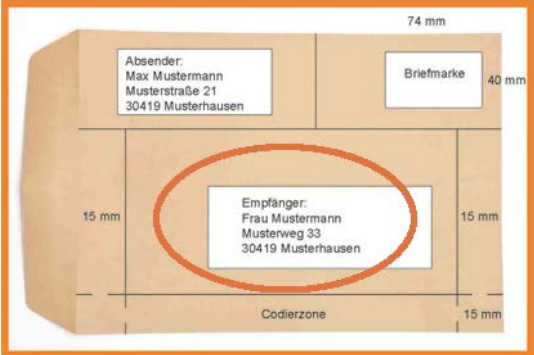

Erstellen und Drucken oder Speichern eines Briefumschlags [Create and print or save an envelope]

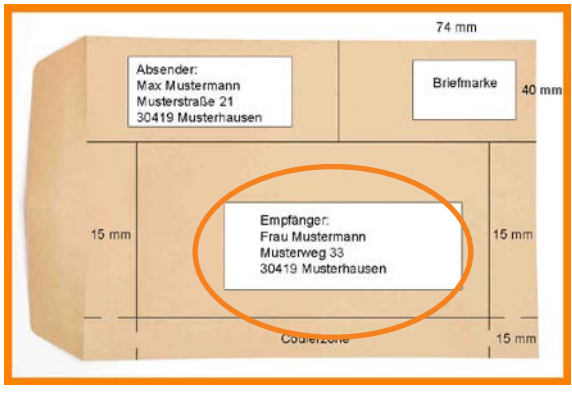
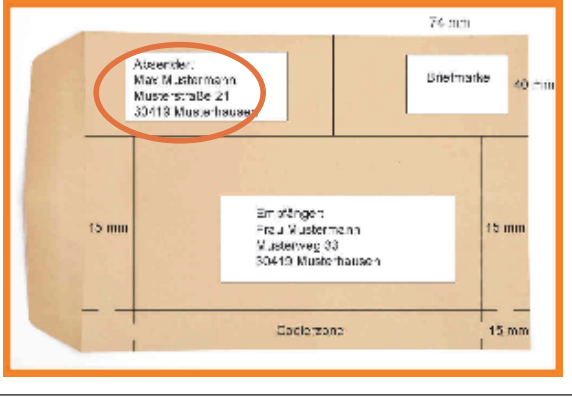
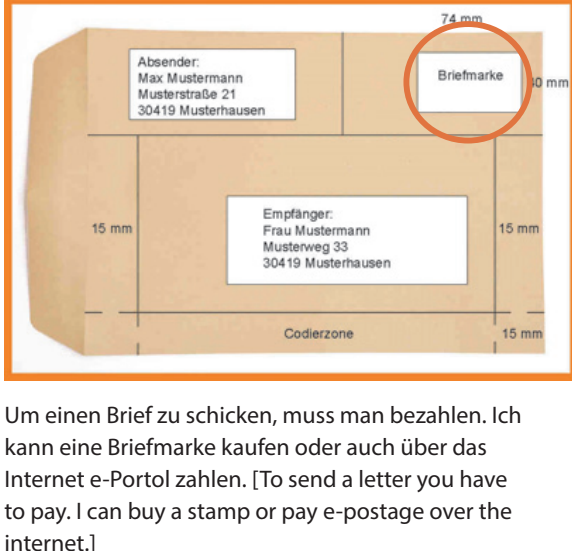
Wie kann man im Word einen Briefumschlag erstellen und drucken? [How to create and print an envelope in Word?]

1. **Ergänzen Sie die Lücken im Text mit den passenden Demonstrativartikeln und -Pronomen** [Fill in the gaps in the text with the appropriate demonstrative articles and pronouns]
2. **Unterstreichen Sie die Ausdrücke im Genitiv** [Underline the expressions in the genitive case]
Anweisungen [Instructions]
 - a) Wenn Sie _____ Umschlag drucken möchten, ohne ihn für eine spätere Wiederverwendung zu speichern, legen Sie einen Umschlag (wie im Feld **Einzug** angegeben) in den Drucker ein, und klicken Sie dann auf **Drucken**. [If you want to print _____ envelope without saving it for reuse later, insert an envelope (as specified in the **Source** box) into the printer, and then click **Print**.]
 - b) Wenn Sie Zugriff auf elektronisches Porto haben, also wenn Sie beispielsweise einen Dienst im World Wide Web in Anspruch nehmen, können Sie diese dem Umschlag hinzufügen. Aktivieren Sie das Kontrollkästchen **Elektronisches Porto hinzufügen**. [If you have

- access to electronic postage, such as using a service on the World Wide Web, you can add it to the envelope. Check the **Add electronic postage** box.]
- c) Hier unten ist das Feld **Absenderadresse**. Geben Sie in _____ Feld Ihre Postanschrift ein, oder verwenden Sie die vorkonfigurierte Absenderadresse. [Here below is the **sender address** field. In the _____ field, enter your mailing address or use the preconfigured return address.]
- d) Wenn Sie _____ Text der Empfängeradresse formatieren möchten, markieren Sie ihn, klicken Sie mit der rechten Maustaste auf _____ Text, und klicken Sie dann im Kontextmenü auf **Schriftart**. [If you want to format _____ text of the recipient's address, select it, right-click _____ text, and then click **Font** on the shortcut menu.]
- e) Wenn Sie eine Adresse im elektronischen Adressbuch verwenden möchten, das auf _____ Computer installiert ist, klicken Sie auf **Adresse einfügen**. [If you want to use an address in the electronic address book installed on _____ computer, click **Paste Address**.]
- f) Wenn Sie _____ Umschlag für die spätere Wiederverwendung speichern möchten, klicken Sie auf **Zum Dokument hinzufügen**, klicken Sie dann auf der Registerkarte **Datei** auf **Speichern unter**, und geben Sie einen Namen für das Dokument ein. [If you want to save _____ envelope for later use, click **Add to Document**, then on the **File** tab, click **Save As** and enter a name for the document.]
- g) Hier ist das Feld für die **Empfängeradresse**. Geben Sie in _____ Feld die Postanschrift der Universität ein. [Here is the **recipient address** field. In the _____ field, enter the postal address of the university.]
- h) Wenn Sie die Absenderadresse für eine spätere Wiederverwendung behalten möchten, _____ auf dem aktuellen Umschlag jedoch nicht verwenden wollen, aktivieren Sie das Kontrollkästchen **Weglassen**. [If you want to keep the return address for future use, but don't want to use _____ on the current envelope, select the **Omit** check box.]
- i) _____ ist die Registerkarte **Sendungen**. Klicken Sie auf dieser Registerkarte und dann in der Gruppe **Erstellen** auf **Umschläge**. [_____ is the **Shipments** tab. On this tab, and then in the **Create** group, click **Envelopes**.]

Dieses Glossar kann Ihnen helfen [This glossary can help you]

<p>Umschlag / Briefumschlag [Envelope]</p>	
<p>erstellen [create]</p>	<p>anfertigen, ausarbeiten, etwas Neues schaffen (<i>Ich habe keinen Briefumschlag, aber ich brauche einen. Deswegen erstelle ich einen neuen Briefumschlag.</i>) [make, elaborate, create something new (I don't have an envelope, but I need one. That's why I'm making a new envelope).]</p>
<p>speichern [save]</p>	<p>Daten aufbewahren, Daten [auf einer CD, auf der Festplatte] speichern. [Keep data, save data (on a CD, on the hard drive).]</p>
<p>drucken [print]</p>	
<p>Datei [file]</p>	
<p>Hinzufügen [add]</p>	<p>als Zusatz, Ergänzung, Erweiterung usw. zu etwas fügen (der Suppe etwas Salz hinzufügen / dem Buch einen Anhang hinzufügen / dem Brief einen Zettel hinzufügen (es. <i>añadir</i>). [to add as an addition, complement, extension, etc. to something (add some salt to the soup / add an appendix to the book / add a note to the letter.)]</p>

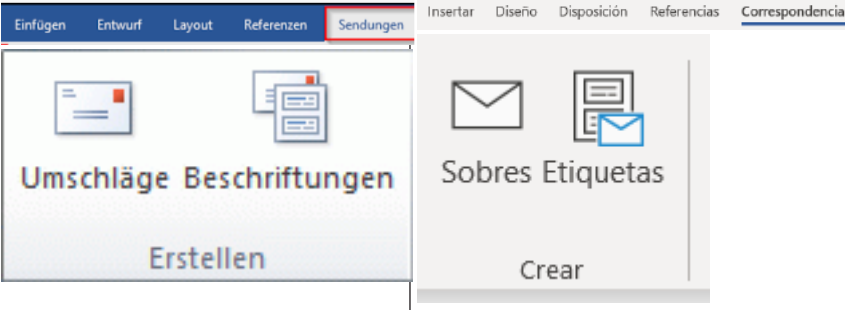
<p>Empfänger [receiver]</p>	 <p>The diagram shows a letter envelope with dimensions: 74 mm width, 40 mm height, and 15 mm margins on the left, right, and bottom. The sender's address is in the top left, and the receiver's address is in the center. The receiver's address is circled in orange.</p> <p>Absender: Max Mustermann Musterstraße 21 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Briefmarke</p> <p>Empfänger: Frau Mustermann Musterweg 33 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Codierzone</p>
<p>Absender [sender]</p>	 <p>The diagram shows a letter envelope with dimensions: 74 mm width, 40 mm height, and 15 mm margins on the left, right, and bottom. The sender's address is in the top left, and the receiver's address is in the center. The sender's address is circled in orange.</p> <p>Absender: Max Mustermann Musterstraße 21 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Briefmarke</p> <p>Empfänger: Frau Mustermann Musterweg 33 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Codierzone</p>
<p>elektronisches Porto [electronic postage]</p>	 <p>The diagram shows a letter envelope with dimensions: 74 mm width, 40 mm height, and 15 mm margins on the left, right, and bottom. The sender's address is in the top left, and the receiver's address is in the center. The postage stamp is in the top right and is circled in orange.</p> <p>Absender: Max Mustermann Musterstraße 21 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Briefmarke</p> <p>Empfänger: Frau Mustermann Musterweg 33 30419 Musterhausen</p> <p>Codierzone</p>

Um einen Brief zu schicken, muss man bezahlen. Ich kann eine Briefmarke kaufen oder auch über das Internet e-Porto zahlen. [To send a letter you have to pay. I can buy a stamp or pay e-postage over the internet.]

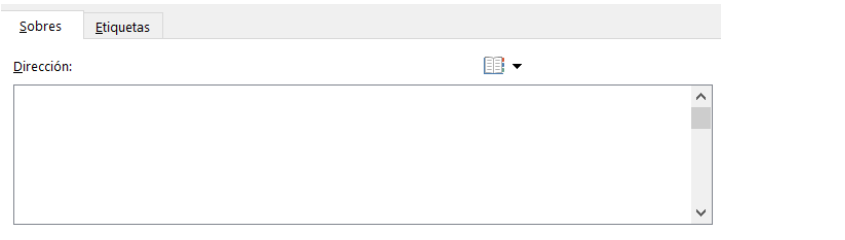
- 3 Erstellen und Drucken oder Speichern eines Briefumschlags. Fügen Sie die Anweisungen aus der Tabelle oben in die richtige Reihenfolge ein und ergänzen Sie die Lücken mit dem Demonstrativartikel (dies-) in der richtigen Form. [Create and print or save an envelope. Put the instructions from the table above in the correct order, filling in the gaps with the demonstrative article (this-) in the correct form.]

Anweisung 1. *Text einfügen* [Instruction 1. *Insert text*]

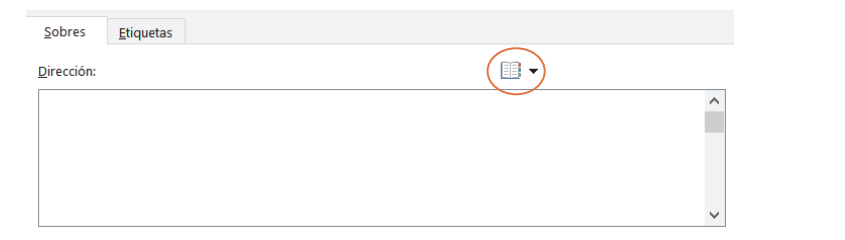
Diese ist die Registerkarte **Sendungen**.
 [This is the **Mailings** tab.]



Anweisung 2. *Text einfügen* [Instruction 2. *Insert text*]



Anweisung 3. *Text einfügen* [Instruction 3. *Add text*]



Anweisung 4. Text einfügen [Instruction 4. Insert text]

3. - Wenn Sie diesen klicken Sie mit Kontextmenü auf Foto rechte Maustaste

4. - Hier unten ist das Feld **Absenderadresse**. Geben Sie in diesem Feld Ihre Postanschrift ein, oder verwenden Sie die vorkonfigurierte Absenderadresse.

Anweisung 5. Text einfügen [Instruction 5. Insert text]

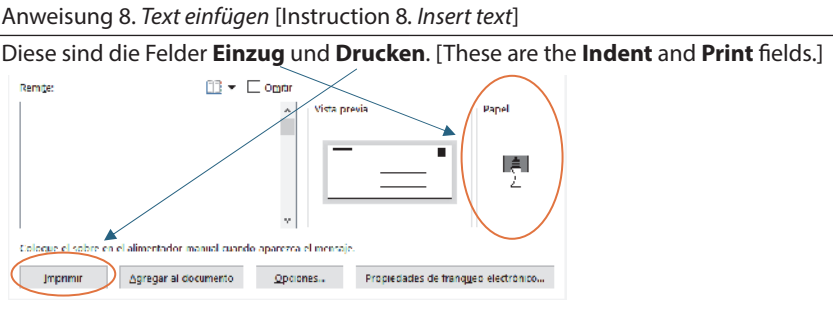
Anweisung 6. Text einfügen [Instruction 6. Insert text]

Anweisung 7. Text einfügen [Instruction 7. Insert text]

Wenn kein Programm für elektronisches Porto installiert ist, dann müssen Sie ein solches installieren. [This is the Add Electronic Postage check box. If you don't have an electronic postage program installed, you will need to install one.]

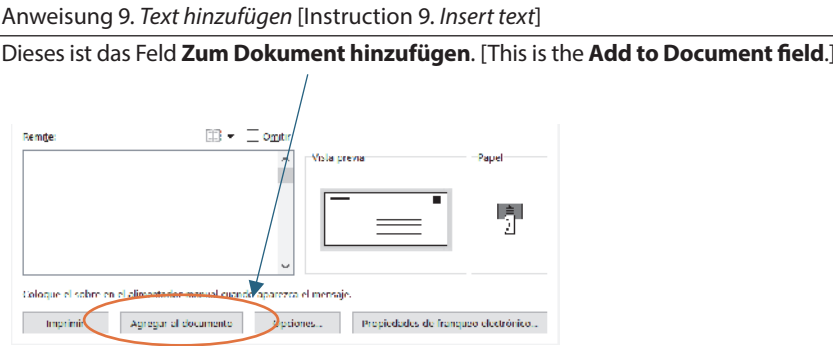
Anweisung 8. *Text einfügen* [Instruction 8. *Insert text*]

Diese sind die Felder **Einzug** und **Drucken**. [These are the **Indent** and **Print** fields.]

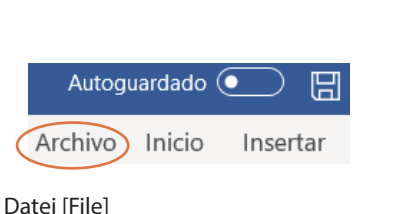
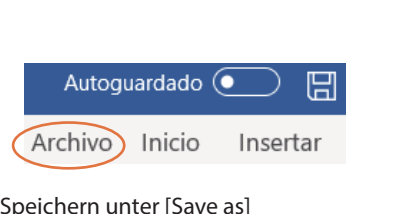


Anweisung 9. *Text hinzufügen* [Instruction 9. *Insert text*]

Dieses ist das Feld **Zum Dokument hinzufügen**. [This is the **Add to Document** field.]



Diese Registerkarte kennen Sie schon! [You already know this tab!]

 <p>Autoguardado <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Archivo Inicio Insertar</p> <p>Datei [File]</p>	 <p>Autoguardado <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Archivo Inicio Insertar</p> <p>Speichern unter [Save as]</p>
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