

# Language mediation in schools

## The case of parent–teacher meetings

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### Introduction

In Chapter 8, it was shown that communication obstacles due to low language competence of migrant families appear as more relevant in parent–teacher interaction than in teacher–pupil interaction. CHILD-UP surveys in fact reveal criticalities. More specifically, it is teachers, more than parents, who look at communication with parents critically: only 56.6% of teachers against 83.5% of parents declare that parent–teacher communication works well. However, parents more than teachers attribute the obstacles to language skills: 34.2% of migrant parents against 21.9% of teachers in fact mention language skills as a problem in the survey. Despite language skills not being mentioned explicitly (or not so frequently), the audio-recorded interviews with the teachers show that they perceive the importance of communicating with parents accurately and acknowledge the necessity of coping with language obstacles as part of parent–teacher communication improvement.

Parents who have little or no competence in the local language are supported by interpreting services, provided by either professional interpreters or cultural mediators. The interpreting activity provided by such personnel is then crucial for the achievement of school–family contacts and relationships. The literature on interpreting in the public services (see e.g. Mason, 2006; Wadensjö, 1998), including studies of parent–teacher conferences (see e.g. Davitti, 2015), has long shown a non-reductive idea of the translation activity that takes place in the interaction. Far from simply reproducing text in another language, renditions are contextualised in communication considering participation opportunities, multiple perspectives and explicitation of assumptions. Interpreter-mediated interaction is thus a situated activity, making sense of the participants' contribution in relation to each other and to the interactional, institutional context in which the interaction takes place.

This chapter provides an analysis of interpreter-mediated parent–teacher interactions in Italian schools, the only ones in the CHILD-UP project in which language-mediated parent–teacher interactions were collected. There were some reasons for this unique collection. The first is that in most of the countries involved in the project, the pandemic made it impossible to collect the recordings. In other countries, such as, for instance, the UK, recording was possible, but the migrant families were proficient enough in the local language to communicate with the

teachers without the help of a language-service. A third reason is that, in Italy, only 25.5% of the teachers consider that teacher–parent communication works well, the lowest percentage among the seven European countries involved in the survey; even though the criticalities may not concern language alone, language mediators are called to support parent–teacher talks, possibly with the intent of mitigating at least part of the problem (the linguistic/cultural one). A fourth reason may be that, differently from other countries, in Italy, lack of language skills is more frequently observed by teachers (26.1%) than by migrant parents (22.6%), a figure suggesting that the schools may have institutionally implemented interpreting services, which are consequently used more frequently. Even if Italy was the only case, an additional reason for not discarding the data is that they provide evidence of interpreting in a scarcely explored public setting, that of schools. These reasons provide the background to understanding the conditions in which interpreting service works in Italian schools and also explaining why the Italian case is worth inquiring.

Our chapter is organised as follows. The second section, following this introduction, discusses studies in interpreter-mediated interaction, with a focus on the school setting. The third section describes our research data and methodology. Our analysis is then provided in two different sections describing interpreting sequences occurring in our mediated interactions: (a) dealing with teachers' expressed concerns and (b) rendering the different types of patients' reactions. Conclusions are drawn about teachers, mediators and migrant parents' participation in mediated parent–teacher meetings.

## **Interpreter-mediated interaction as a form of language mediation**

### ***Language mediation and agency distribution***

Wadensjö (1998) has highlighted the importance of considering interpreting in the public services as an interactional achievement, combining two conceptually distinctive activities: translating the participant's contributions and coordinating their interaction. Renditions may modify the text of previous utterances to meet interactional purposes and interpreting can also be provided by asking for clarification or repeat, explicating the context behind utterances, inviting participants to start or continue talking. In other words, coordination makes sense not only of rendered contents but also of the expected participants' contributions to the conversation. In order to coordinate the interaction, interpreters exercise agency, in e.g. selecting the contents and adjusting them in ways as to make them relevant for the interlocutors' participation (Baraldi, 2019).

Some studies have highlighted the ways in which interpreters' agency can be enacted through the use of language. For instance, interpreters exercise agency in interpreting and rendering the linguistic items by making their meaning explicit for the achievement of community services, thus facilitating access to service seekers (Leanza et al., 2014). Interpreters can also participate in side conversations, adding details, simplifying jargon, and soliciting migrants' narrations of their

lifeworld (Penn & Watermeyer, 2012). In general, interpreters' exercise of agency has been observed in relation to the possibility of empowering the migrants' actions (Angelelli, 2004, 2012; Inghilleri, 2005; Mason & Ren, 2012; Tipton, 2008a). When analysed in the interaction, however, it is clear that interpreters' agency is not an interpreter's sole initiative. To be such, exercise of agency needs to be recognised and legitimised by both the institutional providers and the service seekers attributing interpreters the rights and responsibility to "interpret" what the participants say in the *hic et nunc* of the specific situation. In Chapter 2 of this volume, this idea has been referred to as "epistemic authority" (Heritage, 2013, see Baraldi & Gavioli, 2021; Gavioli, 2015 for a discussion of epistemic authority in interpreter-mediated interaction).

Interpreters' agency is exercised through both renditions and so-called "non-renditions", two concepts put forward by Wadensjö (1998) to distinguish between what can be considered translation of others' contributions and what can instead be considered interpreters' own contributions, e.g. when asking for clarification or repeat. Renditions provide the gist of what has been said by one participant, adapting or re-contextualising it for another participant (Baker, 2006). Non-renditions are produced in monolingual sequences with either institutional providers or migrants, and with the aim of clarifying ambiguous, complicated, or incomplete utterances. Interpreters' agency can facilitate interlocutors' participation both through monolingual, dyadic sequences in which opportunities are given to clarify one participant's point of view, and through renditions in which contextual information is provided and the goals of the encounter made explicit. Of course, the interpreters' exercise of agency may not always have a facilitative effect in communication (Tipton, 2008b) and accidents may occur, sometimes depending on the skills of the language professionals involved. We will not, however, get into this problem in this chapter (hindering aspects of interpreters' exercise of agency are discussed in e.g. Baraldi & Gavioli, 2021).

### ***Interpreter-mediated interaction as language mediation in educational settings***

Interpreter-mediated interaction has been examined in different settings, but very few studies have focused on educational contexts. Those who did concentrated mainly on teacher–student communication, particularly in contexts in which sign-language interpreting is used (see e.g. Winston, 2004; Slettebakk Berge, 2023). Studies on parent–teacher interaction are dealt with in Tipton and Furmanek (2016), who note the agentic participation of interpreters. In their discussion, interpreters are shown as displaying agency, as being involved participants with social responsibility associated with the intention of supporting pupils' learning.

The first study to delve into conversational data collected in school settings was Davitti's much-quoted paper published in 2013, analysing conversations involving teachers, language mediators and mothers in Italy and England. Her research highlighted that, through their renditions, the mediators oriented to upgrade the

teachers' assessments, by adding positive discursive elements about the children's performance. Such upgrading, Davitti noted, made the assessments acceptable for the mothers and enhanced their agreement, while refraining them from commenting on or challenging the evaluations, and from responding to teachers' recommendations. A later study by Davitti published in 2015 provided a more nuanced analysis, including the possibility of positive effects of mediators' upgraded renditions on mothers' active participation.

A further study by Vargas-Urpi and Arumí Ribas (2014) analysed a single interpreter-mediated interaction between a Spanish teacher and a Chinese mother. They showed that, in this interaction, the mediator uses both renditions and non-renditions, and quasi-pedagogical intentions emerge from expanded renditions in particular. Vargas-Urpi (2015, 2017) also showed that mediators' actions tend to exclude the parents, either by substituting their possible answers or by engaging in dyadic sequences with the teachers. Another result of this study was that the mediator's modified renditions of the teacher's utterances show an orientation to partially adapting teachers' contributions to what the mediator expects the migrant mothers can actually understand.

The few available studies on parent–teacher interaction thus show an orientation of the mediators to interpret the pedagogic activity with both negative and positive outcomes. While on the one hand, upgrading the teachers' assessments might acknowledge the family effort in helping in their children education, on the other it may reduce parents' active participation in doing more. Moreover, while adaptation of assessments to the parents' expectations might improve their understanding, on the other it may attribute parents not enough competence in dealing with the teachers in the educational matters regarding their children.

In this chapter, we look at the mediators' translating and coordinating activity in dealing with teachers' concerns. We analyse the display of the mediators' exercise of agency in the challenging attempt to give migrant parents a chance to participate in meetings with the teachers. Parents' reactions show that their involvement is in fact achieved and that their reactions can be convergent or non-convergent with the teachers' concern. Non-convergent reactions interestingly include the parents' perspective on their children's home life, a perspective, normally not taken in the expression of teachers' concerns and which may or may not be taken up by the teachers in subsequent talk.

## **Data and method**

All the data were recorded in Italian schools and consist in end-of-term parent–teacher, interpreter-mediated meetings illustrating the children's reports and discussing their general performance at school. In the CHILD-UP project a collection of 18 encounters was planned, but in fact we ended up with more, as we had the opportunity to record meetings taking place remotely during the pandemic. The total collection thus gave us 28 recordings: 25 in primary schools, 2 in nursery schools and 1 in a secondary school. In order to avoid

interference due to different types of schools, we focus on the largest sample from primary schools only.

The 25 encounters include 10 language-cultural mediators providing interpreting service, 39 teachers (11 interactions with 1 teacher; 14 with 2 or 3 teachers) and 25 parents, one per encounter, mothers or fathers. The languages involved, besides Italian, are 6: Albanian (2), Arabic (3), Chinese (10), Punjabi (1), Twi (4), Urdu (5). The total recorded time is 7h 11' and the average duration of each encounter is 18'. The encounters are either in person (14) or online (11). The children participate in 14 encounters. Space in this study is not enough as to discuss child participation in parent-teacher meetings, but some preliminary findings can be seen in Baraldi and Ceccoli (2023).

The encounters were collected with audio-digital instruments and then transcribed with the ELAN annotation tool to allow the transcript link to the audio. The transcriptions were carried out using the Jeffersonian set of symbols (see Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Dealing with transcriptions in the different languages was not easy and involved both researchers and mediators working side by side. Final transcripts include: a line in the parents' language (using the appropriate alphabet), a transliteration in the Latin alphabet to allow for representation of overlapping talk, an almost word-by-word translation in Italian and lines in the teachers' language, Italian. Comments by the mediators were sometimes included to explain some relevant contextual features. The data shown in this chapter provide simplified transcripts, including one line per speaker plus their translations in English. Some comments between double brackets are added to facilitate understanding of "contextualising events" such as laughter or implicit reference to the participants.

The data show that teachers' concerns are recurrent and demanding for the mediators in that school-family collaboration is sometimes heavily challenged. The discussed concerns mainly regard the pupils' skills in the Italian language and the necessity that families give their children opportunities to learn Italian, but other skills or child behaviour may also raise concern. Teachers' concerns are reacted to by the parents in different ways and parents sometimes take initiative, providing additional explanations about their points of view, asking questions or objecting to the teachers' concerns.

Such complex interplay is rendered by the mediators, who coordinate the contributions both exercising their agency and allowing for exercise of agency by the other interlocutors. Renditions of teachers' talk may be split in parts to facilitate their understanding by the parents, or may involve expansions and explications contextualising the concerns or making suggestions clear. Renditions of parents' talk seem instead to involve less re-contextualisation and modification and offer the family perspective quite openly. It is interesting to note though that when school-family collaboration is considered good enough, thus raising appreciation rather than concern on the parts of the teachers, little or no mediators' expansions are given, and indeed we may have direct communication in Italian, suggesting that appreciation can be understood, and possibly reacted to more easily, by migrant parents.

## Mediators' renditions of teachers' concerns for family support

Mediators' renditions of teachers' concerns are complex and may include explications and questions to the parents. We have identified two main types of renditions belonging to two categories identified by Wadensjö (1998), expanded and multi-part. Both the expansion and the splitting in parts, however, show specific characteristics, which are presented below in their basic forms. Expanded renditions explicate the teacher's concern and add either a good auspice or (practical) suggestions; multi-part renditions explain the teachers' concerns over the child as a sort of preliminary context from which some consequences can be derived.

### Expanded renditions and their coda

Expanded renditions involve explication of teacher's concerns plus an addition of content on the part of the mediator. Such addition is structured as a "coda" in the mediated stretch of talk, basically covering the final part of it and contains either a good auspice or practical suggestions to cope with the teachers' expressed concern. Let us see one example of the first case and two of the second.

In Excerpt 1, the teacher's concern is that, by working solely on his own, the child does his homework in a hurry, with not enough concentration. She suggests that the mother can help him at least with maths that, being based on numbers, requires little knowledge of Italian. The mediator's rendition in turn 36 expands the teacher's appreciation of the child working on his own, renders the suggestion that the mother can help a bit and concludes by expressing good wishes: "he will get better marks inshallah".

#### Excerpt 1 (Arabic) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female]

035 TEAf: no va bene ma anche in- per matematica si vede ovviamente che lavora da solo ma non è un problema quello (.) però dovrebbe farli un pochino più (.) lentamente: (.) sono dei calcoli (.) sono delle parti di di memorizzazione (.) si deve concentrare un po' di più (0.6) magari la mamma comunque sulla matematica un pochino lo può aiuta:re perché alla fine (.) non è come l'italiano dove (.) c'è un problema di lingua (.) sì sono (.) delle operazioni in colonna sono le tabelline (.) potrebbe un pochino:: (.) insomma seguirlo perché so che lavorare da solo può essere un pochino più difficile (.) però lui in classe segue (.) eh:: (.) comunque:: (.) è:: bravo  
*well that's fine and even in mathematics one can see that he works alone that's not a problem (.) but he should do them ((the exercises)) a bit (.) more slowly (.) it's calculation (.) it's exercises on retention (.) he needs to concentrate a bit more (0.6) maybe mum in some way on maths can he:lp him a bit because after all (.) it's not like Italian in which (.) there's*

*a language problem (.) yes, it's (.) arithmetic operations it's times table charts (.) she could a bit:: (.) I mean she could keep an eye on him because I know that working alone can be a bit harder (.) but in class he follows (.) eh:: (.) in any ca::se (.) he's:: good*

- 036 MEDf: *hena el ustada bitae irriyadiaat bitul lak hata hia min khilal ettamarin arfa anaho byaemal altamarin liwahdu bas da mush mushkil(.) bitul lak ashan hua kuis (1.0) bi mh mh (.)raki arf (.) alit' lik bravo (.)bas hia bitul lak enek mumkin tisadilh fi lbiyt (.) alashan erriyadiaat hua eibara an 'arqam (.) yaeni mumkin tisadilh (.)u mumkin hataa (1.0) y yigyb 'ahsan (.) in sha' allah here the maths teacher is telling you that she too knows through his exercises that he works alone but this is not a problem (.) she is telling you because he's going well (1.0) mh mh (.) you know that - (.) she said he's good (.) but she is also telling you that you can he::lp him at home (.) because maths is made of numbers (.) this means you can help him (.) and it is also possible that that he takes better marks (.) inshallah*

As can be seen in the example above, the mediator's rendition is elaborated beyond her expression of good wishes, but good wishes are one way in which mediators expand their renditions of teachers' concerns, highlighting possible solutions and their positive consequences for the child.

The following two examples show mediators' explicated renditions, adding practical suggestions to the parents. In Excerpt 2, the teacher's concern regards the possibility that the child does not have enough opportunity to use the Italian language. In turn 125, she addresses the child asking if she goes to the cinema with a friend (S, in the transcript). The (implicit) suggestion is explicated by the mediator in her rendition in turn 125, in which she explicitly invites the mother to let her child go to the cinema more often, as films are all in Italian:

**Excerpt 2** (Chinese 1) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female]

- 125 TEAf: *eh eh con la S andate al cinema? Andate:: eh eh with S do you go to the cinema? You go::*
- 126 MEDf: *让她们去看电影啊，反正意大利都是意大利文电影嘛，多让她们去那些- let them go to the cinema, films are all in Italian language, let her go frequently-*

While Excerpt 2 gives a rather simple example of the type of change that is involved in this expanded rendition (basically an explicated suggestion), Excerpt 3 gives a more complex picture. Here, after a long comment in which she praises the child, particularly for her performance in maths, the teacher expresses concern that the girl's competence in Italian may stop her from improving adequately. In turn 52 below, the conclusion of the teacher's comment is an explicit praise.

**Excerpt 3** (Twi) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 052 TEAf: m:h la porto ad esempio perché è una bambina che .hh con una grande: volontà: e una grande attenzione (.) #è::# mh è un modello positivo per tutti  
*m:h I take her as a model student because she is a girl who .hh with strong: will: and great dedication (.)#she is::# mh a positive model for all*
- 053 MEDf: mh 3nti w) no wa hunu se w) no w)n y3 italian teacher (.) w)no w) y3 maths teacher (.) 3nti no ne subet no di3 w) se even though kasa no k)raa (.) wa hunu se kasa no 3nti a ma 3ny3 ni nyinaa na w) tumi (.) w) tumi y3 bu- w) no a tumi w) noa tumi use na adwene kase wa ninyinaa w) sheda kyee n3 nyinaa 3nti nani agye se ne sub[ject]=  
*mh so consider that she is not the Italian teacher (.) she is the math teacher (.) so in her subject even though the language (.) she has seen that because of the language she does not always succeed (.) she can do but< she can she can use her brain you see that maths (.) using her reasoning to do it even if she hasn't learnt the language yet and even if she hasn't completely understood yet she's((the teacher is)) happy for what concerns her sub[ject]=*
- 054 PARf: [a:h ]
- 055 MEDf: =matemat- matemaths no w) y3 adi3 (.) w) y3 adi3 the way  
 =mat-maths she's good (.) she's good for the method
- 056 PARf: yeah (o[k a y ])
- 057 MEDf: [w) si fa] 3 y3 a yi wei try se w) b3 te asi3 3nna w) mo se italy kasa no still no w) sheda da hunu y3 w) shdea kyee y3 bu- ne solution ne se 3bia )bia nka w) ne nkrofu di agoro aa nkwa da w) mo ka kasa no (.) 3 no b3 bua no a ma communication aba nt3m (.) wa hunu se kasa no more w) ka no more w) ne mbrofo no 3ka no (.) te more a w) te [instead]=  
*[she uses for what she tries to understand and they say that the Italian language she hasn't learnt it yet but< a solution might be that she plays with people or children speaking the ((Italian)) language (.) that will help her develop her communication competence (.) consider that the language the more you speak it the more you speak it with the whites (.) the more you learn it [instead] =*
- 058 PARf: [e::h]
- 059 MEDf: =se w) ne ghanafuo nk)aa  
 =of going out only with Ghanaians

In her rendition in turn 53, the mediator clarifies the teacher's concern, distinguishing between the child's excellent competence in maths and a not terribly good knowledge of the Italian language. In the rest of her rendition, covering the last part of turn 57 and turn 59, a practical suggestion is added by the mediator: the child should play with "white" children, rather than only with Ghanaians.

**“Contextualising” multi-part renditions**

The second type of rendition is more complex. It shows up as a long multipart rendition roughly divided into two parts, the first describing a teacher's concern for the child (expression of worry for inappropriate behaviour, possibilities that some obstacles impede improvement, or that too little is done to enhance improvement), the second drawing a consequence of such concern for the child. The first part “contextualises” the second which then comes as a coherent conclusion to the first part. While in the first part the teacher's concern is rendered to the parents as a “de facto” situation, the consequence is drawn by the mediators and the parents together (and can be initiated by one or the other).

Let us illustrate the case through two examples. In Excerpt 4, the concern rendered in the first part is a heavy one in that the child does not attend school properly. The family is trying to move the child to a different type of program (so-called “full-time”), a possible reason for her non-regular attendance. So the teachers lengthily express concern for the child, a concern that has been rendered by the mediator to the mother who replied that the girl often does not want to get up and go to school. In the excerpt, the gist of the concern is rendered as a multi-part rendition in turns 162–167, the consequence is drawn by the mediator in turn 168, shared by the mother in turn 169 and further reinforced (with a practical suggestion, as in the pattern of expanded renditions shown above) by the mediator in the last turn in the excerpt.

**Excerpt 4** (Chinese 2) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 162 MEDf: 这个希望你们家长能够让她明白(.)学校是要去的, 就是她的责任okay?  
*I hope that you parents can make her understand (.) that school has to be attended, it's her duty, okay?*
- 163 PARf: (??)要自己盯一下  
*I should keep an eye on her*
- 164 MEDf: 我知道她的性格有点强硬L的, 就是她的脾气很倔-  
*I know that L has a strong personality, I mean she's very stubborn-*
- 165 PARf: 对对对对  
*yes yes yes yes*
- 166 MEDf: 她想干嘛就干嘛, 在学校也这样  
*she does what she wants to do even at school*
- 167 PARf: 嗯  
*yes*
- 168 MEDf: 但是我们是大人, 趁她现在年龄还小需要我们耐心一点多辅导就是教导她一下  
*but we are adults, we have to be patient and advise her while she's a small girl*
- 169 PARf: 我们也要多用点心哪  
*we need to do more*

- 170 MEDf: 对对，多用一点心，不能继续再让她这样任性下去了，这样如果你们家长不配合的话，他们老师在学校的时间毕竟有限嘛，八点到一点钟，不可能五个小时都盯着她看吧，是不是? Okay?  
*yes, be careful, you cannot go on allowing her to be so capricious, so if you parents do not collaborate, the time teachers have at school is not much after all, from eight to one, they cannot keep eyes on her for five hours, can they? Okay?*

In Excerpt 5, the teacher's concern regards the fact that the child stopped attending the afterschool activities, which were highly beneficial to him. The concern is portrayed in a multipart rendition in turns 159–165. The consequence is drawn by the father in turn 166 (“no”) who also supplies the solution to the expressed concern, that is the child will get back to afterschool service soon. It is interesting to note that the mediator fully supports the solution suggested by the child's father.

**Excerpt 5** (Chinese 3) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARm – parent male]

- 159 MEDf: 老师说(.)就是A这个孩子呢(.)很聪明(.)也很机灵哦(.) [okay]  
*the teacher is saying (.) that A this boy (.) is very intelligent (.) and also clever (.) [okay]*
- 160 PARm: [mh]
- 161 PARm: 主要就是说(.)呢:: 刚开始(.)就是说(.)开学的时候(.)他不是有去那个doposcuola嘛  
*but principally it is that (.) uh:: at the beginning (.) I mean (.) at the beginning of the school year (.) he attended that afterschool program didn't he?*
- 162 PARm: mh
- 163 MEDf: 课后辅导班 (.) 对吧?  
*afterschool service (.) right?*
- 164 PARm: mh
- 165 MEDf: 后来是没有去上了(.)对吗?  
*after that he stopped attending (.) right?*
- 166 PARm: 没有三月份又会让他去上的  
*no I will have him go again in March*
- 167 MEDf: ah okay 那就最好了  
*ah okay that would be fantastic*

Excerpts 4–5 thus show that when mediators render the teachers' concerns to the parents some significant re-elaboration is involved, by expanding the reasons for such concerns, expressing hope that a solution is found, or giving suggestions on possible solutions. The mediators also help the parents grasp the reasons for the teachers' concerns by giving them the opportunity to proffer what may be a teacher's educational conclusion, e.g. that their little girl needs more guidance or that

their child needs joining programs supporting their skills – as shown in Excerpts 4 and 5. Access to the “school world” and the teachers’ expectations is made plain for the parents in the mediators’ renditions, to the point that the parents display their reactions in ways which are clearly relevant uptakes of the teachers’ contributions. In what follows, we will look at such parents’ reactions more extensively.

## **Parents’ reactions**

Parents’ reactions are sometimes elicited by the mediator (e.g. with a question like “do you have any questions?”), but more often they are spontaneous contributions. Spontaneous contributions come in two main forms. One is a short feedback, normally a response to a question that is immediately rendered to the teacher(s) and then taken up as a prompt to suggest or even insist on what needs to be done to improve the child’s school performance. Another form of parents’ reactions is more elaborated and comes in the form of a short narrative focusing on the child’s life at school or at home. We have called these reactions “narrating reactions”.

Both forms of reaction can be convergent or non-convergent with the teacher’s concern. Convergent reactions are in line with the teacher’s concern and rest on the idea that more support can be given to achieve children’s higher performance at school. Non-convergent reactions normally shift the focus from the child’s performance at school to some other aspect of their lives. The narrating reactions, in particular, draw a picture of the child that is in contrast with the one shown in the teachers’ contributions and provide an alternative view of the child.

Unlike the renditions of teachers’ concerns, the mediators’ renditions of the parents’ reactions show little or no expansion. Renditions of convergent reactions are indeed straightforward and close, and mediators do not engage in dyadic talk with the parents before or during their renditions. Clarification seems to be not needed in these cases. Even in the case of non-convergent reactions, renditions to the teachers are only slightly explicated, while little dyadic talk with the parents is used. Overall, it seems that, in both cases, parents’ contributions are offered to the teachers openly and directly. When parents’ reactions comply with teachers’ assessments, teachers’ reactions are confirmatory and supplemented with suggestions about how to work on the child’s performance at school. When parents’ reactions are non-convergent, instead, opportunities to shift talk’s topic from the child’s school performance to their life at home display some resistance in the teachers’ contributions, being either dropped, or taken up but immediately reinterpreted in the light of the child’s performance as a student. The excerpts below show the parent’s reaction, the mediator’s rendition and the teacher’s reply.

### **Convergent reactions**

Convergent reactions are probably the most frequent and they are normally compliant with the teachers’ concern and/or the consequences highlighted. Convergent reactions show the parent’s will to collaborate. Short feedback is normally of two

types: “yes, I will”/“yes, let’s do” or “I’ll ask my husband/her father”. See an example of both cases:

**Excerpt 6** (Urdu 1) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARm – parent male]

- 134 MEDf: lehaza aap ise is tarah ki kitabe khreed kar de ta ke vo ghar me bi thora parh sake  
*now you’ll buy him a book of this type so that he can read a bit also when he’s home*
- 135 PARm: okay me ise khreed kar du gi  
*okay I’ll buy it to him*
- 136 MEDf: okay [ha detto adesso:]  
*okay [she said shortly:]*
- 137 TEAf [allora ascolta] (0.6) siccome siamo- contente di continuare a seguirlo a casa  
*[now listen] (0.6) as we are- happy to go on helping him at home*

**Excerpt 7** (Albanian 1) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 207 PARf: aa në rregull e pys edhe burrin (.) nëse është dakord po:  
*aaah okay I’ll ask my husband (.) if he agrees yes:*  
 (1.3)
- 208 MEDf: la mamma sta dicendo che chiede un po’ anche: a suo marito se è d’accordo così poi ti dirà [se:]  
*mum is saying that she will ask also: her husband if he agrees so afterwards she will tell you [if:]*
- 209 TEAf: [certo] <certo certo>  
*[certainly] <certainly certainly>*

As shown in the excerpts, the mediator’s rendition is close, substantially a repetition of the parent’s contribution, and the teacher’s acceptance is immediate (see the overlapping mediator–teacher talk in Excerpts 6 and 7).

Excerpt 8 shows an example of a convergent narrating reaction. In turn 203, the teacher concludes her assessment saying that the child has improved and in turn 204, the mediator translates this conclusion. In turns 206, 208, 210 and again 218, 221 and 227, the mother’s contribution is a long narrative about the child’s strong engagement in learning Italian. The mediator renders the mother narrative’s details to the teacher who provides appreciation (turn 212), continuation feedback (turns 214, 216) and agreement (turn 220). Despite a misunderstanding occurring in turns 218–220 (the mother says that the child is so good that she corrects her father’s Italian and the mediator’s ambiguous rendition is instead understood as being the father who helps the child), the concluding teacher’s contribution is perfectly consonant with the mediator’s summarised

rendition of the mother's talk: by repeating the same words used by the mediator, the teacher confirms that, from her perspective too, the child is trying hard (see turns 222–223).

**Excerpt 8** (Urdu 1) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 203 TEAf: ecco (.) per noi è effettivamente molto migliorata M (.) su questo possiamo (.) davvero dirlo  
*right (.) for us M has really improved a lot (.) on this we can (.) really say that*
- 204 MEDf: chendi sade vaste cafi betar ho gai e  
*she says that for us she has improved*
- 205 TEAf: e inoltre (.) ci- ci- ci tiene ci prova e ci tiene molto [secondo me]  
*moreover (.) sh- sh- she cares she tries and she cares a lot [in my opinion]*
- 206 PARf: [nai onu na] che  
lo che onu scioq e sciuru sciuro vicih andi pi e na school te onu italian sikhian da scioq e gio kugih vi ethu sikh che giandi te o ghar già che boldi è fer ma ode babà colu pucihdi a kher manu te samgih te ni andi ona colu pucihdi chende ne che cafi lafaz boldi e  
*[no you can say] that she has a strong will because she's coming to school from the beginning and she has a strong will to learn the Italian language anything she learns here when she comes home she repeats she utters the words I ask her father what she's saying because I cannot understand he says she utters many Italian words she didn't know before (.) and she speaks well*
- 207 MEDf: ha detto prima quando non capiva non diceva niente (.) a casa non diceva neanche a nessuno=  
*she said before when she didn't understand she didn't say anything (.) at home she didn't speak to anyone*
- 208 PARf: =or te ciote baia nal vi boldi rendi e gio sikh che giandi e  
*=even with her small siblings she tells what she learns*
- 209 MEDf: adesso da quando: (.) sta imparando (.) quando torna a casa (.) parla coi suoi fratelli quelle parole nuove che [impara]  
*now since: (.) she has started learning (.) when she comes home (.) she tells her small siblings those new words that she [learns]*
- 210 PARf [vei italian] zuban vicih gal cardì e apni zuban vicih nahi kardi giadu ethu school vicu giae sarà din  
*[she speaks Italian] not her language when she gets back from school*
- 211 MEDf: quando torna dalla scuola allora parla con suoi fratelli anche in italiano (.) [prova:]

- when she gets back from school then she speaks with her siblings also in Italian (.) [*she tries*]
- 212 TEAf: [bene]  
[good]
- 213 MEDf: qualsiasi- cioè quelle parole che impara (.) le ripete [in casa]  
*any- I mean those words she learns (.) she repeats them [at home]*
- 214 TEAf: [mh]
- 215 MEDf: mi ha detto io non capisco ma io chiedo dopo a suo papà cosa ha detto papà dice sì che dice questa parola eh ma ha detto che sì sta imparando delle paroline: (.) così però sta provando ha detto adesso qualcosa di imparare ((laughing)) l'italiano:  
*she told me I don't understand but afterwards I ask her father what she said and dad says yes that she utters this and the other word eh but he said that she ((the girl)) is learning new little words: (.) she is trying she said now she ((the mother)) has someone to teach ((laughing)) Italian:*
- 216 TEAf: mh
- 217 MEDf: ha detto prima  
*she said before*
- 218 PARf: te je koi lafz ghalat bole te papa dasde ne ke enj bol  
*she helps her dad when he gets some word wrong eh*
- 219 MEDf: lo aiuta papà e quando sbaglia qualche parola:: eh  
*((literally and with a mistake in Italian)) him helps dad when he gets some word :: wrong eh*
- 220 TEAf: mah sì lo sbagliare [ci mancherebbe]  
*well yes getting words wrong [that's normal]*
- 221 PARf: [te onu scioq] e giacan bacea nu honda na e scioq e italian sikhhan da pela sal ayi nhi he te hun aui e (.) te bolne te sikhne da scioq es  
*[she has strong will] as children have (.) she has a strong will to learn the Italian language before she didn't come to school (.) she has a strong will to speak*
- 222 MEDf: vuole imparare italiano  
*she wants to learn Italian*
- 223 TEAf: sì vuole proprio impararlo (.) vuole proprio imparare a leggere sì capisce eh ci prova (.) quindi è la M che dovrà insegnarle l'italiano  
*yes she really wants to learn it (.) she really wants to learn how to read it is evident eh she tries (.) so it is M who has to teach her Italian*

It is interesting to note that no expansion of parents' talk is provided in the mediator's renditions in all of the cases above. Rather, some additional contribution, besides their positive acceptance, is provided by the teachers who either repeat confirmation (as in Excerpt 7), or elaborate on what can now be done with the child: care for him at home (Excerpt 6) or who may teach her more Italian (Excerpt 8).

### Non-convergent reactions

Similarly to convergent reactions, non-convergent parents' reactions can be provided either as feedback to the mediator's rendition, or as a narrating reaction. Let us have a look at two examples showing non-convergent feedback.

In Excerpt 9 below, the teacher expresses concern for the parents showing interest in the child's school activity and suggests that, if they are not at home, such interest can be shown by calling the child frequently on the phone asking if all is fine with school and checking that the homework was done. The excerpt shows the mediator's multipart rendition contextualising the teacher's suggestion as a coherent conclusion to the recommendation that the parents should show interest in the child's performance at school. In a short dyadic sequence with the father, covering turns 232–236, the mediator first explores how many times a week father and child talk to each other. In turn 237, the father finally says that they speak to each other rarely and mainly through voice messages. Such reaction is rendered explicitly to the teacher who evaluates the contribution as non-convergent ("eh", turn 239 and 241) and then explicitly suggests what to do (turn 241).

**Excerpt 9** (Chinese 4) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARm – parent male]

- 232 MEDf: 你们一个星期通话几次? 你打电话给她  
*how many times a week do you hear from each other? Do you call her*
- 233 PARm: 我们跟她(.)我每个星期都会上来一次的嘛  
*we with her (.) I get back once a week*
- 234 MEDf: 每个星期都会上来一次?  
*you get back once a week?*
- 235 PARm: 对  
*yes*
- 236 MEDf: 但是, 你们当中会通话几次?  
*but, how many times do you hear from each other?*
- 237 PARm: 基本上没什么事情都话, 我们很少通话, 就是偶尔聊一下微信就是  
*normally if there are no issues, we hear from each other seldom, we only hear from each other with Wechat*
- 238 MEDf: 所以就是说 eh:: tornano su una volta alla settimana e telefonicamente si sentono quasi niente  
*that's the point ((in Italian)) eh:: they come back home once a week and on the phone they hear from each other practically never*
- 239 TEAf: eh
- 240 MEDf: solo coi messaggi vocali a volte  
*only with voice messages sometimes*
- 241 TEAf: eh no è meglio che si sentano per telefono sì sì sì può fare  
*eh well it would be better if they heard from each other on the phone, yes yes it can be done*

In Excerpt 10 below, the teacher's concern consists in making sure that the child has enough opportunities to speak Italian. It is rendered through an expanded rendition with practical suggestions about how to give the child such opportunities (turn 167). The parent's reaction is found in turn 171 (an immediate reply to the mediator following a short sequence involving the teacher and the child (not shown)). The mother confirms that the girl has opportunities to speak (turn 171), but is not convergent with the mediator's conclusion in turn 172 ("with Italians"), a divergence that is made explicit in turn 173 ("they're all Chinese"). In this excerpt, as in the previous one, the mediator renders the non-convergent parent reaction to the teacher, who evaluates it as non-convergent ("eh eh", turn 175) and provides a more explicit suggestion to give the child more opportunities to speak Italian.

**Excerpt 10** (Chinese 1) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 167 MEDf: 老师是希望，就是以他们这个年龄，就是说希望你们家长能够给他们足够的空间，可以自由的，就是跟朋友约好啊，去图书馆啊，去外面吃个什么东西啊，就是尽量让他们出去-
- what she is saying, I mean at their age, I mean it would be necessary that you parents could leave them more space, that they could be free, I mean to arrange with their friends, to go to the library, or go out to eat something together, try and let them go out more often-*  
 ((three turns omitted))
- 171 PARf: [都跟朋友出去的  
*she goes out with some friends*
- 172 MEDf: [跟那些意大利人啊  
*[with Italians*
- 173 PARf: [都是中国人  
*[they're all Chinese*
- 174 MEDf: ha detto la mamma che esce spesso ma solo coi cinesi e parlano solo in cinese  
*mum said that she goes out frequently but only with the Chinese and they speak only Chinese*
- 175 TEAf: eh eh parlano solo il cinese hhhh (.) però ad esempio c'è la ragazza che fa motoria da noi  
*eh eh they speak only Chinese hhhh (.) but for example there's the girl who teaches gym at our school*
- 176 MEDf: mh mh
- 177 TEAf: eh:: secondo me lei è molto carina sia la ragazza sia la squadra perché poi sai con la squadra si fan tante cose al di là del gioco  
*eh:: it seems to me she's very nice both the girl and the team as you know with the team one can do many things besides playing*
- 178 MEDf: mh mh

179 TEAf: dopo si va insieme si va a far le partite insomma si ampliano::  
*after playing one goes together one goes for the matches I mean one  
 broadens:::*

The parents' reactions to the teachers' concerns are typically rendered back to the teachers immediately by highlighting their non-convergence. Non-convergent parents' reactions are evaluated by teachers as "not so good" and are normally accompanied by an explicit suggestion about how to cope with the problem and help the child achieve better school performance.

Let us now pass to two examples of narrating parents' reactions. The two sequences are different in that they show different types of management on the part of the mediator: while in the first case the rendition of the parent's non-convergence is rather direct and straightforward, in the second the mediator's contribution slightly mitigates the parent's reaction to the teacher.

In Excerpt 11, the teachers' assessment of the child at school is good, but they highlight that the girl does not work on her homework properly. The mediator's rendition includes the teachers' assessment and an expansion suggesting practical parents' support to their child doing homework. In turn 19 below, we can see such expansion. In turn 20, the mother's response comes in the form of a narrative focussing on the child's life at home, with a little sister who does not let her do her homework and the child working on it hard at night when her sister is asleep. The mediator renders promptly, even before the mother has actually finished (see the mediator's false start in turn 21), providing a close rendition of what happens at home. In turn 26, the mother completes her narrative, in broken Italian, insisting on her daughter's doing her homework, but doing it late at night.

**Excerpt 11** (Albanian 2) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

19 MEDf: ((part of the turn not shown)) por thotë ka nevojë që njerëzit ti rrinë te koka (.) mami babi që ti rrin te koka (.) në mënyrë që të:: edhe përsa i përket leximit sepse më shumë vështirësitë thotë i ka në të lexuar dhe në të shkruar (.) jo në matematikë (.) [mësues-] ((part of the turn not shown)) *but she ((the teacher)) says that she ((the child)) needs someone to be with her (.) mum dad to be with her (.) so that:: also for reading because the main difficulties she ((the teacher)) says that she ((the child)) has them in reading and in writing (.) not in maths (.) [the teach-]*

020 PARf: [K ka një  
 prob-](2.1) K ka një Problem (.) se ka go- ka motrën një vjeç e gjys (.) ajo edhe me mbyll derën e dhomë::s mh nuk e lë:n mh të(.) të përshtat- ta ketë mendjen aty te mësimet (0.8) i mer diaron ja zgharavit (.) nuk nuk e lë një sekondë (0.7) vjen momenti që kur të vij burri (.) ajo do detyrohet ti bëj detyrat se ajo e vogla flen (.) edhe

është njëçikë më e qetë po është orar që asaj i flihet një çikë gjumë edhe është njëçikë (.) nuk është në gjendje që ti bëj (.) nuk e lë (.) jam me një fëmijë të vogël në shtëpi prandaj po them

[K has a prob-] (2.1) *K has a problem (.) because she has the chil- she has a sister of one year and a half (.) she ((K)) even if she shuts the door of her room:: mh she((the little sister)) doesn't let: mh to (.) adapt- to keep her attention there on her homework (0.8) she ((the little sister)) takes her diary she scribbles on it (.) she doesn't let her down a second (0.7) it comes to a point that she ((K)) is obliged to do her homework when my husband comes home (.) because the little girl is asleep (.) and she ((K)) is slightly more at ease but this is a time when she ((K)) falls asleep and she's a bit (.) she is not able to do them ((the homework)) (.) she ((the little sister)) doesn't let (.) I'm with a small baby at home so this is why I say this ((meaning: I know what it means))*  
(1.0)

021 MEDf: sta dicendo [che il proble-]  
*she's saying [that the proble-]*

022 PARf: [është shumë e vështirë për K] (0.9)aq sa ka arrit  
përshembull është- është shumë brava (.) e shoh se e ka me qejf  
sidomos matematikën (.) e ka shumë:  
*[it is very difficult for K] (0.9) what she achieved for example is- she is very good (.) I see she likes it mainly mathematics (.) she has too:*  
(2.0)

023 MEDf: sta dicendo che K è una bimba che (.) è vero è bravissima però c'è  
il problema che lei ha una fa- ha una fr- eh: sorella piccolina: che  
ha un anno e mezzo (.) .hh e quindi:: (.) non la lascia (.) le prende il  
diario che l:- scarabocchia: (.) o:: li prende i compiti quindi non la  
lascia mai tranquilla a studiare (.) e K (.) è davvero brava per quello  
che fa perché dice che si mette a studiare quando viene il padre dal  
lavoro quindi l'aiuta un po' lu:i (.) e la sorelli- la sorellina è andata::  
a dormire (.) però è tardi quindi non è un orario dicit[mo per]  
*she's saying that K is a girl who (.) that's true she's excellent but there's  
the problem that she has a ba- she has a br- eh: little sister: who's one and  
a half (.) hh and so:: (.) she doesn't let her (.) she takes her diary that s:-  
scribbles: (.) or she takes the homework so she never lets her study in peace  
(.) and K (.) is really good for what she does because she ((mum)) says that  
she ((K)) gets down to study when her father comes home from work so he:  
helps her a bit (.) and the sist- the sister has gone::: to bed (.) but it's late  
so it's not time for let[s say for]*

024 PARf: [po']  
*[(in italian)] a bit]*

025 MEDf: studiare per [una bimba]  
*studying for [a child]*

- 026 PARf [è un po'] tardi (.) otto per esempio (.) alle otto un po' più tardi perché stanca tutto il giorni (.) viene un orario: (2.1) anche io sono troppo: (.) non lascio niente  
 [(in broken Italian)] it's a bit] late (.) eight for example (.) at eight is a bit late because she tired all the day (.) comes a time: (2.1) me too I'm too (.) I leave nothing  
 (0.5)
- 027 TEAf: eh ho capito però (.) ehm:: (.) cioè non possiamo comunque (.) giustificarla  
 eh I understand but (.) ehm:: (.) I mean we cannot in any case (.) justify her

The narrating reaction of the mother shows an alternative perspective on the teacher's concern, inviting the teacher to consider the circumstances under which the child operates. The narrative focuses on the child's life at home sharing her needs and spaces with those of a little baby. It is interesting to note that the teacher's reply in turn 27, after the mother's contribution, shifts the focus back to the child as a student whose behaviour "cannot be justified".

Excerpt 12a follows a teacher's report of her scolding the child who was found beating a classmate. Even if the teacher understood that the child responded to her mates' constant provocations, she stresses that, when such provocations arise, children should tell the teachers. After the mediator's rendition of the teacher's report, recommendation and attempt to have the child speak to her (only the latter rendition is shown in turn 174 below), the mother's non-convergent narrating reaction is initiated. The mother's narrative is split in several parts which are rendered to the teacher one after the other, getting different types of reactions from the teacher. In turn 175, the mother's narrative shifts the focus from the teacher's to the child's perspective of the events and describes the child's desperate reaction after being scolded. In turn 176, the mediator renders the teacher's recommendation suggesting that the child should have told the teacher. In turn 177, the mother does not take up the mediator's suggestion, thus declining to accept the teacher's recommendation, and repeats that the child was desperate after being the only one seen and scolded. The mediator's rendition is introduced with a brief summary in turn 178. The details of the mother's narrative are, however, provided after a teacher's acknowledgment (turn 179), focusing in particular on the desperate reaction of the girl who, when in a rage, stops talking. The mediator's rendition is interrupted by the mother's reaction to the teacher's recommendation that the girl should tell her when some mate is provocative. This mother's piece of narrative in turn 181 is followed by the teacher's response to the mediator's previous rendition about the girl's desperation. In handling the mother's narrative continuation with the teacher's response, the mediator renders the teacher's contribution and not the mother, thus mitigating the mother's defence. The teacher's response in turn 182, rendered in turn 183, drops the mother's narrative perspective and re-establishes the view prospected by her previous recommendation that the child needs to speak to the teachers when her mates are aggressive to her.

**Excerpt 12a** (Urdu 2) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 174 MEDf: chendi e che me H nu vi achea che urdu vicih pucih chec dass qu mareai (.) cafi bar pucihea lechin giadu galti car le fer ni boldi fir ine dassea coi ni fir zahri gal e me dantna si-  
*she ((the teacher)) says I told H to ask her ((the child)) in Urdu why you beat them she asked many times when she ((the child)) makes a mistake then she stops speaking so I ((the teacher)) naturally had to scold her*
- 175 PARf: school vicih koi vi masla honda gis time ethu car(.) giandiabya teacher colu dant pave ya kisse bache nal koi gal hove gis time ethu car giandi e ethu hi rondea giandi e giu hi appardi e rondea time nal pele ciup carwa k fer pucian fer dassdi e chiendi che pele ali ne mugie tang chia -tha pir aur aik italian bacie ne tab maestra ne nahi dekha giab many mara tab dekha  
*if anything occurs at school or she is scolded by the teacher as soon as she gets out of school she starts weeping and she weeps all the way home then I calm her down then I ask what happened she said that first A and another Italian child annoyed me the teacher didn't see them when I beat them the teacher saw me*
- 176 MEDf: lekin e kendi e me pucihdi rahi a lekin oss time das dendi te fer na dant pendi  
*but she ((the teacher)) says I asked her ((the child)) if she had told me in that moment what was going on I wouldn't have scolded her*
- 177 PARf: chendi jab mane usco mara maestra ne dekha or mugie danta  
*She ((the child)) says that when I beat them she ((the teacher)) saw me and scolded me*
- 178 MEDf: quello che le abbiamo detto prima  
*same as we said before*
- 179 TEAf: okay
- 180 MEDf: che lei quando succede qualcosa a scuola e la maestra sgrida qualche bambino (.) allora appena esce dalla scuola comincia a piangere (.) e arriva a casa: eh e allora dopo con calma lei chiede dopo di-=  
*that she when something happens at school and the teacher scolds some child (.) then as soon as she gets out of school she starts weeping (.) and she arrives at home: eh and then slowly she ((the mother)) asks afterwards to- =*
- 181 PARf: =acсар ghar (.) ja ke dasdi he che mamma mugie italian bacie tang carte hain mane maestra ko btaya b he che vo mugie tang karte (.) lekin  
*=sometimes (.) she tells me that Italian children annoy me (the child) and I told the teacher (.) but*
- 182 TEAf: ma non si tratta di piangere o di che (.) basta semplicemente (.) eh: (.) dire che cosa succede perché se no non riusciamo a darle una mano in questo senso

*this is not a matter for weeping or anything (.) she just needs (.) eh: (.) to say what's going on because otherwise we cannot give her a hand in this sense*

- 183 MEDf: o andi e oda ron da maqsad ni bas enna dass dea kare che ki gal hoi e fer assi odi help kara ghe  
*she says there's no need for weeping she just needs to say what's going on then we help her*

The continuation of the mother's narrative in Excerpt 12b below is again non-convergent, highlighting that it is part of the child's personality to stop talking as a reaction to problems. The mediator follows again bit by bit summarising the parent's narrative and stressing the core of it on the girl's personality and sensitivity. It is interesting to note that the mediator's reduced renditions in turns 185 and 187 call for the attention of the teacher ("mh?", turn 188) and leave the mediator the floor to render the full last bit of the mother's narrative in turn 189, collaboratively concluded by the teacher, the mediator and the mother (turns 190–192).

**Excerpt 12b** (Urdu 2) [TEAf – teacher female; MEDf – mediator female; PARf – parent female]

- 184 PARf: o saim giandi e matlab fer onu e ho gianda e che bola che acha  
*she gets scared she closes into herself this means she thinks what shall I say what shall I answer*
- 185 MEDf: si spaventa  
*she gets scared*
- 186 PARf: saim giandi e (.) ghar vi odi ei halat e giadu koi kam kharab ho giae ya bai nal larai ho giae he te us time onu pucihio saim giandi e boldi nai te fer kafi time bad giado gussa le gianda te fer boldi e che è kam hoes  
*she gets scared (.) even at home if she does something wrong or if she argues with her siblings if we ask she gets scared she stops answering after some time anger goes and then she says this is what happened*
- 187 MEDf: sì anche a casa ha stesso comportamento  
*yes, also at home she has the same behaviour*
- 188 TEAf: mh?
- 189 MEDf: anche a casa stesso: (.) stesso comportamento perché anche con i fratelli quando succede qual- qualcosa allora (.) dopo si arrabbia non parlano non risponde dopo finché- cioè va via la rabbia  
*even at home same: (.) same behaviour because even with her siblings when something happ- happens then (.) she gets angry they don't talk she stops answering then until- I mean when anger goes*
- 190 TEAf: dopo- esatto  
*after- exactly*
- 191 MEDf: riprende:-=  
*she restarts:-=*

- 192 PARf: =vei cafi time bad (.) das ciordi e  
 =*after some hours (.) she tells*
- 193 TEAf: okay allora: (.) che questa cosa (.) anche in casa se riescono (.) a  
 darle una mano: proprio perché se no (.) rischia di (.) di essere lei  
 penalizzata in certe cose  
*okay so: (.) that this thing (.) also at home if they succeed (.) to give her  
 a hand: really because otherwise (.) she risks (.) being hindered in some  
 cases*

This time the teacher does not drop the mother's perspective completely. She accepts that it is part of the child's personality and sensitivity to respond to problems in this way but calls for the help of the family to work together so that the girl can control her behaviour and cope with the school's expectations, thus re-establishing her authority in defining the boundaries of "good" behaviour (see turn 193).

## Discussion and conclusions

This chapter has shown the work of language mediators in rendering talk between migrant parents and teachers while coordinating the meeting and giving support to the interlocutors in responding to each other relevantly. This is a key issue since, as some teachers said in the interviews, without full cooperation between schools and migrant families, working with children is really hard. This chapter has also shown the challenges arising in communication between teachers and migrant parents and the work mediators do to contextualise the teachers' expectations on the one hand and the parents' participation in coping with such expectations on the other. Although the data have been collected in one single country, the analysis reveals aspects characterising interpreting in specific interactional contexts that may help consider ways in which language mediation can support migrant parents' agency more in general.

As mentioned in the second section of this chapter, the literature has stressed both advantages and problems of mediators' work in parent–teacher interactions. Studies have, however, overlooked an existing gap between teachers' authority – associated with knowledge deriving from their educational role – and parents' low authority in supporting their children's efforts in coping with the requirements of the education system. Our findings show two main facets of this gap. On the one hand, teachers' concerns cover a large part of parent–teacher encounters and their expectations for the parents to cope is made visible in the mediators' explicated renditions, in which suggestions are given about how to work on the children's school performance and good wishes are expressed that the child's performance improves. The "school knowledge" is thus made clear to the parents seeking their support for their children's education. On the other hand, the parents' knowledge contribution, e.g. in giving details about their children's life at home or about aspects of their personality, even when rendered closely and clearly, is barely made relevant by the teachers. This dismissal takes two forms. First, teachers show

interest and appreciation for parents' responses only when these responses converge with teachers' assessments or requests. Second, non-convergent parents' responses are systematically dropped by the teachers in the interaction, either by explicitly assessing them as non-convergent and suggesting a solution, or by re-interpreting parents' narratives into appropriate school behaviour.

Against this background, the mediators' agency is visible in two ways. First, by working on the rendition of the teachers' concerns so as to make them both accessible and acceptable to the parents. Explications of the school system's expectations and encouragement in reaching high(er) school performances both have this function. Second, the mediators make the parents' reactions openly and immediately available to the teachers, offering such reactions to the teachers' attention and evaluation. With both teachers and parents, then, mediators exercise agency in choosing multiple forms of renditions for the participants' production of knowledge (Baraldi & Gavioli, 2014), focussing on the conditions of the ongoing communication process and redirecting it (Baraldi, 2017; Baraldi & Gavioli, 2016).

A question which may arise at this point is to what extent mediators' renditions support migrant parents' agency and hybrid integration (see Chapter 2) in the education system. While the data show that the mediators succeed in soliciting a teachers' reaction to parents' talk, such reaction re-establishes school performance, rather than opening talk on possibly useful details about the children's life out of school. Teachers maintain their rights to confirm or deny the value of parents' production of knowledge, showing reluctance to accept the hybridisation of their and the parents' knowledge. So while mediators do support parents' efforts in producing their knowledge, they do not challenge the teachers' authority. Our results then suggest that if any changes might be produced in the school system, they need to be thought of and implemented at a higher organisational level. But our results also suggest that more family-centred approaches need to be urgently implemented for school systems to develop into more hybrid while more welcoming environments for migrant children.

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