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# *Developing mediation skills at the tertiary level of education*

**Mediacja językowa w programie studiów wyższych**

The article discusses the need to implement various aspects of mediation, a concept included in CEFR 2003 and updated in the form of new illustrative descriptors in the 2018 CEFR *Companion Volume*, into English Philology program with reference to students' needs, the role of mediation in the process of both traditional and online communication. The bottom-up perspective on the selection of mediation descriptors adopted by the author in the project published in the CEFR *Companion Volume, Examples from Practice* (2022) inspired further changes in the English Studies program. The article presents a model of implementing the mediation-oriented strategies and activities into the syllabi of Practical English, specialization courses, seminars, etc. and discusses their advantages as well as challenges.

**Keywords:** mediation, English Philology studies program, learning objectives, didactic materials

**Słowa klucze**: mediacja, filologia angielska, program studiów, efekty uczenia, materiały dydaktyczne

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> *In today's information societies, mediation is more essential than ever before because of the social shift in late modernity from the production of goods to the production of knowledge. And, knowledge is always mediated. It is mediated through language and image in all types of situations in daily life. Mediation is required and it occurs everywhere*. (Bessie Dendrinos, 2006)

## 1. Introduction

Since the 2018 publication of the *CEFR Companion Volume* and the provision of descriptors for mediation competences for different levels of language proficiency, mediation has become the focus of both research and practice of many language educators. It has been included in the new national curricula, course books and exams. "One can recognize relatively quickly a number of contexts in which the mediation descriptors may prove to be relevant, as a starting point and stimulus for providing context-specific definitions of learning objectives, desirable competences, job or study requirements, etc." (North, Piccardo, 2016: 46). In fact, the Polish core curriculum for teaching foreign languages also includes mediation competences as necessary learning outcomes. Kucharczyk (2020) identifies various mediation focused objectives (in the Polish curriculum referred to as text transformation) at different levels of education.

Mediation skills are necessary in all spheres of life, whether public, private, education or work related (North, Piccardo, 2016). These skills include: collaboration, critical thinking, learner autonomy, empathy, intercultural competence among many others (Gee, Gee Milan 2020). Therefore, there has been a growing need to include mediation in teacher training programs. The author was responsible for the coordination of the Council of Europe qualitative and quantitative validation workshops (2015–2016) at SWPS University, and later developed a study whose main aim was to implement Descriptors for Mediation and Online Communication in the university EFL teacher training program. The study was chosen by the Council of Europe for publication in the *CEFR Companion Volume, Examples from Practice* (2022). This bottom-up perspective inspired further changes in the English Studies program at SWPS University.

English Studies programs at both B.A. and M.A. levels are addressed to those candidates who "are interested in other cultures, have a passion for learning languages and meeting diverse people…" (*English Studies*, 2023). One of the English Studies faculty members, Paweł Pyrka, SWPS University Professor, a literary and cultural studies expert, claims

"Philology teaches discipline and sensitivity, required for working between cultures, languages and technologies." (cited in English Studies, 2023) and adds: "I have come to see how understanding languages is understanding people, how reading cultures is learning life. How sensibility and sensitivity converge in one's voice and action. And, inevitably, how the essence of philology is love of humanity(ies) (Pyrka, 2023). English Philology departments across academia are not language schools. These are institutions that provide learning environment necessary to teach language skills up to C1 (B.A.) and C2 (M.A.) levels. They also impart academic and transferrable skills, including critical thinking, research, and technical skills. Together, these enable effective communication in foreign languages in a variety of cultural, academic and professional contexts and in different modes of communication. English Philology graduates have knowledge and understand key theories, concepts, and research findings, in linguistics, literary and cultural studies. Their competencies extend to applied linguistics (including language teaching, translation, and communication in ESP), the history and culture of the target language countries, pedagogy, entrepreneurship, and public speaking. "Graduates of English Studies build successful careers in various industries, including education, translation, international business, media, marketing and advertising, film and TV production, government administration, and NGOs" (*English Studies*, 2023).

## 2. Literacy, language politics and academic skills

Education at the tertiary level is an important step in building literacy.

> In recent decades, the concept (…) has developed into a very complex and challenging educational objective. There is broad consensus among experts and policy makers that "literacy" means more than simple technical skills like reading, writing and numeracy" (Beaco et al, 2004: 103).

Literacy is an umbrella term for a repertoire of competences (understood as a combination of knowledge and skills), learned both in and outside the system of education, such as: critical thinking, public speaking, non-verbal communication, self-reflection, autonomy, career planning, social and civic competences, quality assurance, empathy, ethics, and entrepreneurship.

There have been many attempts in the European Language politics to provide a transparent and coherent framework of reference of learning and teaching objectives that will meet the challenges of modern times. The process first began in the 1970s with the UNESCO report of Edgar Faure et al.

*Learning to Be* (1972) and was further advanced 20 years later with Jacques Delors's *The Treasure Within* (1996). The reports have established grounds for the concept of life-long learning, which has in turn become the focus of European language policy makers particularly in the first decade of the 21st century. One of the concepts defined then that has had an impact on various programs at different levels of education concerned the Key competences for lifelong learning, defined in *Recommendation* (2006: 4) as:

> a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences:

1) Communication in the mother tongue;
2) Communication in foreign languages;
3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4) Digital competence;
5) Learning to learn;
6) Social and civic competences;
7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
8) Cultural awareness and expression

"Key competences are equally important and interrelated since the abilities related to one support the abilities pertaining to the other" (Gadomska, Krajka 2011: 141). However far- fetched it may seem, the concept of key competences was an important step towards developing the learning objectives and didactic materials for effective and full of respect and mutual understanding communication despite different boundaries: social, linguistic, cultural, digital, educational, etc.[1] It resulted in educational programs, such as the Polish interdisciplinary E-*Academy of the Future*, which engaged 200 selected middle schools in Poland, 1832 teachers, and 21 580 pupils (2010–2013).

However, the most important step in providing the framework for education as a lifelong process was the establishment of the *European Qualification Framework* in 2008.

[1] The updated 2018 Council Recommendation for key competences for lifelong learning revises the list of key competences, including "Literacy" and "Multilingualism" as key competences and mentions ability to mediate as essential for multilingual competence. The other key competences are: Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering; Digital competence; Personal, social and learning to learn competence; Citizenship competence; Entrepreneurship competence; Cultural awareness and expression competence.

> Qualifications express what people know, understand and are able to do. They can take different forms such as a (university) diploma or (skills crafts) certificate. Transparency about what people actually learned in order to obtain a qualification ('learning outcomes') is key to ensuring that individuals, employers and education and training providers give the appropriate economic, social and academic value to qualifications (*European Qualification Framework*, 2018: 5).

In turn, the EQF has assisted member states to set their own *National Qualification Framework*. Beginning in 2012, all studies programs in Poland are based on the *Krajowe Ramy Kwalifikacji* (*National Qualification Framework*) with the B.A. studies at level 6 and M.A. studies program at level 7. This is the result of the amendment to the Law on Higher Education, adopted by the Sejm on March 18, 2011. Its aim is to improve the quality of teaching by giving educational institutions more autonomy when designing their programs, which in turn, must contain learning outcomes in the areas of knowledge, skills and social competences, with the corresponding methods of verification. "For the programs it means the inclusion of key competences, taking care of the measurability of learning outcomes and constantly striving for high quality not only of the product, but also of the learning process" (Komorowska, 2012: 17).

During philological studies, a foreign language (or even two) is the medium and target of instruction; mastering communication skills in a foreign language is conducted in diverse groups composed of individuals from different cultures, with different needs, previous education experience and objectives, Therefore, emphasis should be put on designing programs in which the learning objectives include building, on the one hand, creativity, learner autonomy, self-reflection, sensitivity, critical thinking and analytical skills but, on the other hand, learning how to communicate in multicultural environment, how to formulate and express opinions, how to synthesize, analyze, rephrase, explain and translate, to be open and able to understand and solve new ideas and challenges, work under time pressure, online and offline, in traditional, but also technically advanced settings (computer rooms, interactive whiteboards, translation booths, hyflex and virtual classrooms).

## 3. Approaches to mediation in the CEFR

The *Common European Framework of References for Languages* is another influential document introduced by the Council of Europe (2001) whose aim has been to improve the quality of teaching (languages), to provide

"a clear model of language related competences and language use, and practical tools, in the form of illustrative descriptors, to facilitate the development of curricula and orientation of teaching and learning" (*Companion Volume*, 2018:23). The CEFR is of a "dynamic and open" character (*Companion Volume*, 2018:21) as in order to keep the status quo, it must adapt to the changing times and needs of its users. A major change in the CEFR policy was the shift from three modes of communication to four modes: reception, production, interaction and mediation. In 2018, the updated version of the CEFR was published: *Companion Volume,* as a result of 2015–2017 consultation workshops. The changes relate to: updated 2001 scales, new scales for mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competences. *The Companion Volume* has also redefined the role of the language user actively engaged in co- construction of meaning, "mobilizing general and plurilinguistic and pluricultural competences," by using, for example "purposeful, collaborative tasks whose primary focus is not the language." An action oriented approach sees learners as "social agents, involving them in the learning process, recognizing the social nature of language learning and use" (North 2018:17–20, North 2019: 29). Mediation in the CEFR is defined as a process that enables communication (oral and written) between people who for whatever the reason cannot communicate directly, do not understand each other. The mediator can mediate the ideas, texts, communication in an appropriate form. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional (*Companion Volume*, 2018: 103). Therefore, the authors of the CEFR CV distinguish:

- Linguistic mediation/textual mediation ( interlinguistic and intralinguistic);
- Cultural mediation > facilitating understanding;
- cultural awareness (within a language and across languages and cultures),
- Social mediation (including through media) > playing the role of intermediary (linguistic and cultural mediator); critical cultural awareness;
- Pedagogic mediation > educators mediating knowledge, concepts and thinking (cognitively and relationally). (North, 2019: 50)

All types of mediation-based activities should, therefore, include collaboration (North, 2018/2019), which is reflected in the new descriptors in the C*ompanion Volume*: online conversation and discussion, goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration, plurilingual and pluricultural competences (Fig.1).

The *Companion Volume*'s publication was followed by an international pilot study launched in 2019 by the Council of Europe with the aim

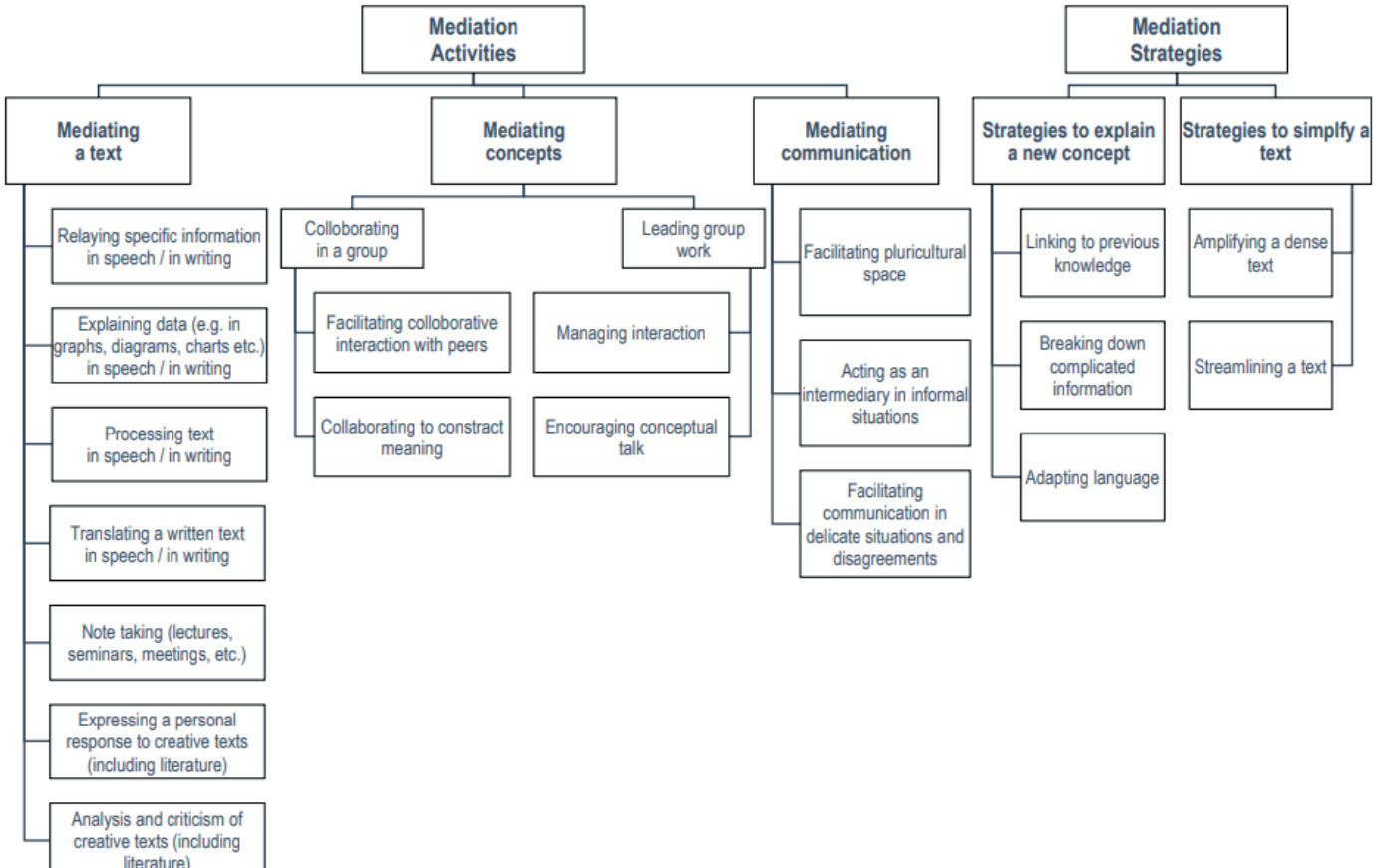


**Figure 1. Mediation activities and strategies in *The CEFR Companion Volume* (2018: 103) from:** https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion--volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989**, page 104**

to incorporate the new descriptors at different levels of education. The author developed a proposal whose main aim was to implement descriptors for mediation and online interaction in the university EFL teacher training program. The study was chosen by the Council of Europe for publication in *The CEFR Companion Volume, Examples from Practice* (2022).

This bottom-up perspective inspired further changes in the program of English Philology at both B.A. and M.A levels including adding the focus on mediation into to the syllabi of Practical English courses, seminars and specialization modules. These changes referenced students' needs, the role of mediation in the process of communication (both traditional and online) and the role of literary, linguistic and cultural context in the choice of mediation based materials and activities.

## 4. Proposals for integrating mediation into the program of English Philology

One of the main learning outcomes of the B.A. and M.A. programs of English Philology assumes gaining language competences at C1 and C2 levels, respectively. These competences are mainly built from an initial B2 level as a learning outcome of Practical English courses. However, since all lectures, seminars and workshops are conducted in English, the process takes place constantly in the learning context, and during informal communication between students outside classes. Overall mediation descriptors (Fig. 2) clearly relate to the needs and expectations of the students at different levels of tertiary education. According to Janowska and Plak, "This general and holistic description of mediation aims at facilitating a reflection on the individual-social, and cognitive – relational nature of mediation" (2021: 87). It also shows the framework for developing skills (from B2 to C2) which are crucial in the academic context, such as: collaboration, discussion, building rapport, expressing personal opinions, cultural awareness, problem solving, synthesizing, acting as a mediator in delicate situations, participating in conflict solving, showing respect to otherness and expressing empathy, and many more.

Language learning involves mastering communication skills, the skills used in a variety of both private and professional situations. The focus on mediation not only provides a natural, interdisciplinary and practical context for a variety of activities, but also engages students in the long and demanding process of academic education and in effect builds 21st century competences. (Gadomska 2021)

The proposal of integrating mediation into the program of English studies operates at two levels: the inclusion of mediation based learning

| OVERALL MEDIATION | |
|---|---|
| C2 | Can mediate effectively and naturally, taking on different roles according to the needs of the people and situation involved, identifying nuances and undercurrents and guiding a sensitive or delicate discussion. Can explain in clear, fluent, well-structured language the way facts and arguments are presented, conveying evaluative aspects and most nuances precisely, and pointing out sociocultural implications (e.g. use of register, understatement, irony and sarcasm). |
| C1 | Can act effectively as a mediator, helping to maintain positive interaction by interpreting different perspectives, managing ambiguity, anticipating misunderstandings and intervening diplomatically in order to redirect talk. Can build on different contributions to a discussion, stimulating reasoning with a series of questions. Can convey clearly and fluently in well-structured language the significant ideas in long, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own fields of interest, including evaluative aspects and most nuances. |
| B2 | Can establish a supportive environment for sharing ideas and facilitate discussion of delicate issues, showing appreciation of different perspectives, encouraging people to explore issues and adjusting sensitively the way he/she expresses things. Can build upon other's ideas, making suggestions for ways forward. Can convey the main content of well-structured but long and propositionally complex texts on subjects within his/her fields of professional, academic and personal interest, clarifying the opinions and purposes of speakers |
| | Can work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds, creating a positive atmosphere by giving support, asking questions to identify common goals, comparing options for how to achieve them and explaining suggestions for what to do next. Can further develop other people's ideas, pose questions that invite reactions from different perspectives and propose a solution or next steps. Can convey detailed information and arguments reliably, e.g. the significant point(s) contained in complex but well-structured texts within his/her fields of professional, academic and personal interest. |

**Figure 2. Descriptors for Overall Mediation in *The CEFR Companion Volume* (2018: 105) from:** https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989, page 105

outcomes into the existing syllabi and addition of whole courses devoted to mediation.

The 2018 CEFR descriptors for mediation (the "CAN DO" statements for different levels of linguistic competence) relate to: mediating a text, mediating concepts, mediating communication and mediation strategies. Mediation based activities and strategies include: translation, interpretation, paraphrasing, summarizing, streamlining, reformulation, linking to previous knowledge, adapting language, breaking down complicated info, and amplifying a dense text. They were included in the program of English Studies before, but the proposal of adapting the syllabi by designing activities that focus on particular learning outcomes for mediation shifts the perspective,

engages students, provides stimulating and practical materials, builds intercultural and social competences and in effect prepares for future careers. (Fig.3)

DESIGNING ACTIVITIES

**4.1. Practical English courses**

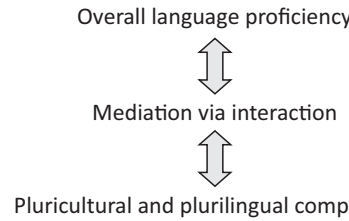


**Figure 3. The use of mediation in designing activities for TEFL courses – integrated skills approach. Based on Gadomska (2021). This model can be applied at different levels of education and in different modes of teaching (whether online, offline or blended)**

Obviously, practicing mediation skills during Practical English class can take a variety of forms and is not a new phenomenon. Whether it is an integrated skills class, or a separate listening and speaking, communication skills or reading and writing class, implementing mediation strategies can bring many benefits. In fact, by focusing on mediation as a learning objective, we provide a more engaging, individualized and flexible context and activate a learner as a social agent. The following are examples of sample online activities (placed on the SWPS University's *Learn Online* Moodle platform)[2], designed by teacher trainees – students of English Philology – based on the selected mediation strategies and activities:

**Activity 1 (Fig.4) Forum**

Focus on mediation (for class discussion, brainstorming, warm-up activities):

1. Strategies to explain a new concept: linking to the previous knowledge,

[2] In fact, all presented activities can be also conducted in a traditional classroom, or in Google classroom – with for example shared documents option.

2. Mediating communication: facilitating pluricultural space.
   - Learning objectives related to mediation (B2): Students can establish a link between prior experience and the topic of discussion; they can formulate questions and answers, encouraging and participating in a discussion that involves students with different cultural background, explains and comments on abstract ideas, individual examples and approaches.

Since this activity is a forum, students can see each other's answers, reply and cooperate to construct meaning. Students can also take different

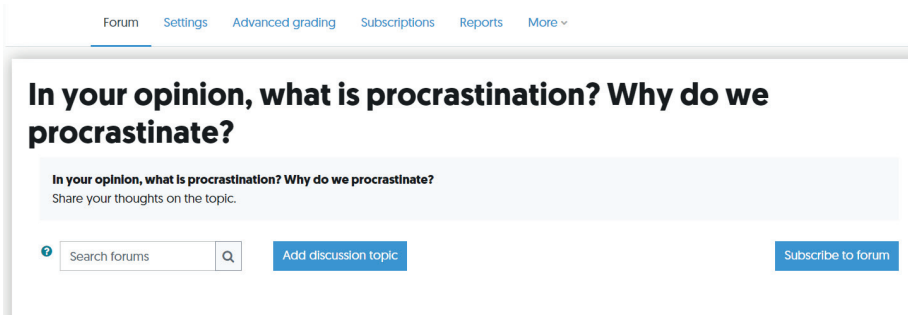


**Figure 4. Activity 1 Student authorial material from:** https://learnonline.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=85427

roles in a discussion, ask questions, manage conversation, etc. The activity can be written (the text is provided in the box), or spoken – with the use of the recording option.

Advantages: Relying on mediation is: engaging, boosting creativity, critical thinking skills, facilitating intercultural communication, building respect and sensitivity, bonding, building social competences, etc.

**Activity 2 (Fig. 5) Assignment**

Focus on mediation (e.g. for warm-up, homework activities): Mediating a non-verbal text: expressing a personal response to a creative text.
Learning objectives related to mediation (C1): Students can interpret and discuss in detail a text, including the associated emotions, feelings, arguments, explanations, etc.

Advantages: The focus on mediation: enables individualization, is engaging, provides natural context, is flexible (can teach both writing and

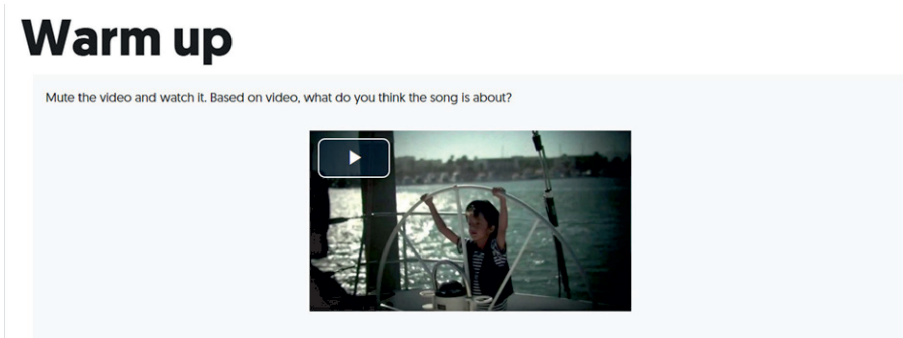


**Figure 5. Activity 2 Student authorial material from:** https://learnonline.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=85427

speaking), can be adapted to the preferred modes of learning (also changed into a listening instruction)

**Activity 3 Assignment (Fig. 6)**

Focus on mediation (for while – and post-listening activities): Mediating a text: note taking

Learning objectives related to mediation (C1): Students can critically evaluate and select relevant, detailed information and arguments from multiple

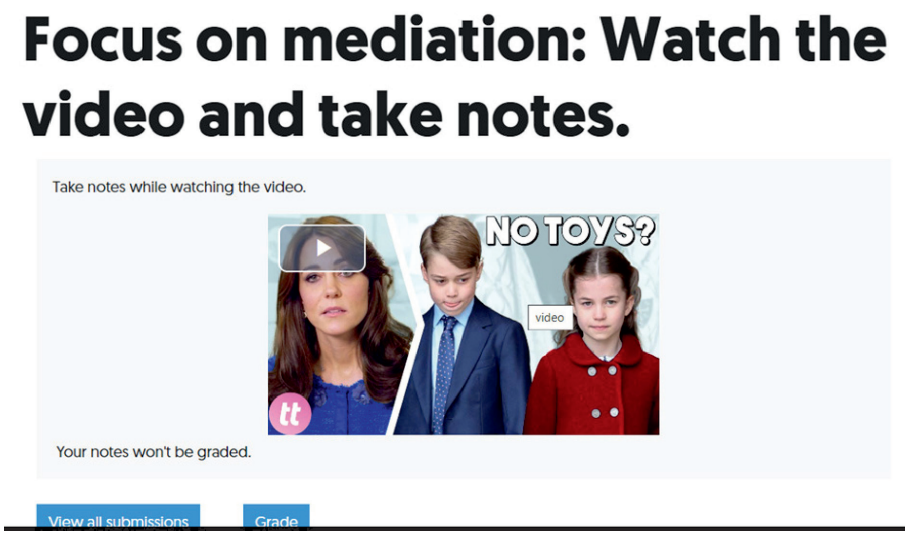


**Figure 6. Activity 3 Student authorial material from:** https://learnonline.swps.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=85427

spoken sources. Students understand the functionality of note taking for a variety of purposes. Students can take notes for the purpose of using them themselves for follow-up activities or for sharing them with the others who, for example, are unable to access the source material.

Advantages: Using the descriptors for note-taking: enables individualization, adaptation, teaching organizational and critical thinking skills, provides flexibility – can be adjusted to a variety of teaching contexts, builds learner autonomy, responsibility.

### 4.2. Academic writing classes

Before the publication of the *CEFR Companion Volume*, the word "mediation" was not used to describe the skills used in the academic writing context. Nevertheless, mediation had been present in the course syllabi (e.g. summarizing, paraphrasing). Applying descriptors for mediation for the purpose of boosting academic writing skills can bring many benefits.

**Activity 4 Assignment (Fig.7)**

Focus on mediation (for written assignments): Processing text in writing
Learning objectives related to mediation (C1): Students can summarize, paraphrase in writing information from external sources, properly referencing and documenting them. Students build sensitivity to the concept of authorship rights.

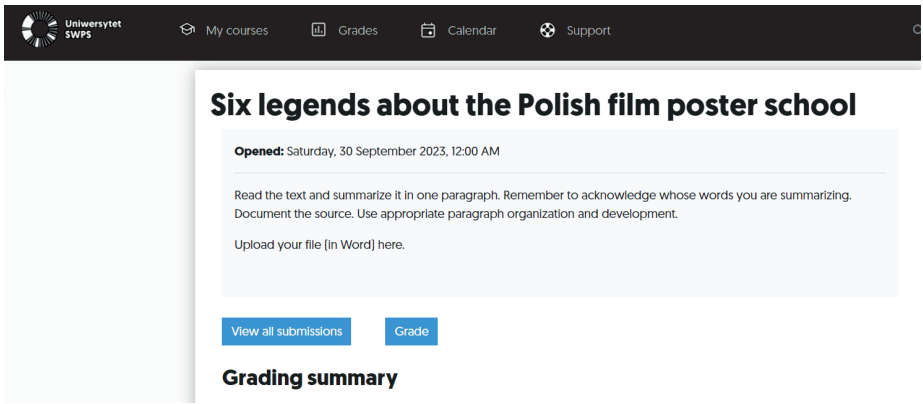


**Figure 7. Activity 4 Trainer sample material from:** https://learnonline.swps.edu.pl/mod/assign/view.php?id=99426&forceview=1

Teaching academic writing skills requires mastering the way we incorporate sources into the text. Students learn how to quote, paraphrase and summarize texts in order to critically address them in their own writing, use them to support their opinions. Especially paraphrasing and summarizing may bring lots of challenges.

Advantages: Relying on descriptors for text processing in writing: enables clear, more direct and engaging formulation of instruction and activity objections, improves reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, and social competences.

**Activity 5 Assignment (Fig. 8)**

Focus on mediation (for introducing the principles of cohesion and coherence, for discourse analysis): Streamlining a text/Strategies to explain new concept: adapting language
Learning objectives related to mediation (C1/C1+): Students understand the difference between cohesion and coherence. Students can apply the principles of cohesion to build a coherent text.

Teaching stylistic principles in academic writing classes requires the application of abstract concepts, such as the principles of cohesion, coherence, and unity. Adapting language and streamlining a text descriptors illustrate the complexity and difficulty of the instruction at different levels of linguistic and communicative competence.

RIVERS, SEAS AND OCEANS

Instruction: Build a paragraph by choosing one three sentences of text. If your choice is correct, the sentence will be added to the text.

1.
A. quickly and night would be much
B. happen in inland deserts, hundreds of
C. Nearly three-quarters of the Earth is
2.
A. Earth's surface were entirely land, the
B covered with water. Water heats up
C temperate zones, is very much affected

The paragraph:
Nearly three-quarters of the Earth is covered with water. Water heats up
…to be continued

**Figure 8. Activity 5 Cohesion and coherence practice adapted from:** http://www.uefap.com/writing/exercise/sequitur/rivers.htm (accessed 18.09.2023)

Advantages: By employing the CEFR descriptors on mediation, the teacher can clarify/adapt the instruction, formulate the objectives more clearly and directly, motivate learners.

### 4.3. Specializations and seminars

#### 4.3.1. TEFL specialization courses

Although the learning outcomes specified in the *Decree of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 25 July 2019 on the standard of education preparing for the teaching profession* do not directly point to the objective of teaching linguistic mediation, it is logically part of teacher qualifications in the area of language didactics and socio-cultural competences. The decree mentions mediation in the context of intervention as an important aspect of teacher qualifications in the area of psychological and pedagogical competences. Since mediation occupies an important position in language didactics, it should be implemented in various courses of teaching specialization (on both B.A. and M.A. levels), for example: courses on methods and techniques of teaching skills and the elements of the language, class management, teaching ESP. Moreover, the new program of English Studies at SWPS University offers a new course for the "Teaching Specialization" at the B.A. level, entitled *Linguistic Mediation in Practice*, which is offered as a workshop in the 3rd year of studies. Its aim is to familiarize students with the current research and recommendations of the European language policy and consequences for the language education on the national level with respect to different aspects of mediation in applied linguistics and culture studies. During the course, students discuss ready materials (coursebooks, tests, etc.) but also design their own authorial materials for TEFL with the focus on mediation as the best practice is the action-oriented approach to learning.

The learning objectives of the course are the following:

- The student knows at an advanced level issues, theories and research methods in the area of linguistic mediation, applied linguistics as well as contemporary challenges facing a foreign language teacher.
- The student has advanced knowledge of the conceptual framework in the field of linguistic mediation (according to CEFR Companion Volume)

- The student knows the practical applications of methods and theories in the field of linguistic and cultural mediation in English lessons, outside the educational context and in the work environment.
- The student knows the practical applications of text mediation, including: cultural texts, in particular functional, literary and scientific texts in English.
- The student is able to search, critically analyze and select information from various sources and media, also using mediation strategies and techniques.
- The student is able to interpret linguistic texts and cultural phenomena analytically and critically, also in cooperation with others and using online communication tools.
- The student is able to substantively select and adapt selected materials and media to the needs of teaching linguistic mediation, also using the functionalities of educational platforms and other ICT tools.
- The student is able to innovatively use selected teaching materials, media, methods and tools (including ICT tools) to create and apply original materials using linguistic and cultural mediation in English lessons.
- The student is able to critically analyze hypotheses related to solving simple tasks and problems in the area of developing language mediation skills in English teaching in various educational contexts. (*Linguistic Mediation in Practice* syllabus)

The course's first edition will take place in the academic year 2024/25. Nevertheless, designing student authorial materials with the focus on mediation has been long practiced as part of ICT in TEFL training**.**

### 4.3.2. Translation, cultural, literary, diploma courses

As translation is a form of mediation, it is obvious that its various linguistic aspects are learned and practical applications mastered by students of English Studies. Therefore, students learn how to apply different mediation strategies, and how to mediate texts, ideas and communication. Courses devoted to studying cultural and literary texts in depth by definition involve elements of linguistic and intercultural mediation in order "to understand and discuss complex phenomena, focusing on developing analytical and writing skills, and the ability to formulate coherent and convincing argumentation" (*English Studies*, 2023) We can use the scale of descriptors from B2 to

C1 to plan and monitor the distribution and application of different tasks for the analysis and criticism of creative texts in order to build and develop concrete competences (Fig. 9).

| ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM OF CREATIVE TEXTS (INCLUDING LITERATURE) | |
|---|---|
| C2 | Can give a critical appraisal of work of different periods and genres (novels, poems, and plays), appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning. Can recognise the finer subtleties of nuanced language, rhetorical effect, and stylistic language use (e.g. metaphors, abnormal syntax, ambiguity), interpreting and 'unpacking' meanings and connotations. Can critically evaluate the way in which structure, language and rhetorical devices are exploited in a work for a particular purpose and give a reasoned argument on their appropriateness and effectiveness. Can give a critical appreciation of the deliberate breach of linguistic conventions in a piece of writing. |
| C1 | Can critically appraise a wide variety of texts including literary works of different periods and genres. Can evaluate the extent to which a work meets the conventions of its genre. Can describe and comment on ways in which the work engages the audience (e.g. by building up and subverting expectations). |
| B2 | Can compare two works, considering themes, characters and scenes, exploring similarities and contrasts and explaining the relevance of the connections between them. Can give a reasoned opinion about a work, showing awareness of the thematic, structural and formal features and referring to the opinions and arguments of others. Can evaluate the way the work encourages identification with characters, giving examples. Can describe the way in which different works differ in their treatment of the same theme |

**Figure 9. Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature) – *The CEFR Companion Volume* (2018: 117) from:** https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989

The program of studies (incl. Practical English, core, and specialization courses) prepares students to write and defend diploma projects and thesis. During the seminars, under the supervision of the supervisors, students "[d]epending on the disciplinary profile…[develop] and [deepen] knowledge and competences in the field of translation, glottodidactics, communication in an international work environment, analysis and interpretation of phenomena and texts of literature and culture as well as research competences …" (SWPS University Diploma seminar 2023 course description).

Moreover, English Philology faculty and students are an international community, consisting of people with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, in this environment, mediation skills develop the awareness, self-reflectivity, sensitivity and empathy necessary to build rapport and collaboration.

Mediation fits logically and practically in the context of English Philology, in fact in the academic context in general.

## 5. Challenges

So far, only the advantages of the mediation focused instruction at the tertiary level of education have been presented. However, it is undeniable that like any process of program modification, it has its challenges. In fact, mediation itself is an abstract and complex concept, which may be confusing not only to students but also to lecturers. The same applies to lower stages of education, teachers and pupils, respectively. The question arises, whether professional language users in general (here I mean English philology graduates, i.e. teachers and teacher trainees, translators, and other specialists) not only understand the complex nature of mediation but also are skilled to apply mediation in practice. Therefore, it is important to introduce mediation in the program of English Philology studies. The above presented samples of the incorporation of mediation into the curriculum focus on a learning-by-doing approach, with the CEFR descriptors being the focus of instruction, in order to improve the effectiveness of the process of fulfilling the learning objectives. The program modifications presented in the article will be verified in the years to come, also by means of the research intended by the author. Nevertheless, we must be aware of the difficulties that we face, such as these rooted in the context of the communication process: background/ nature of the situation, mode, channel and means of communication, interlocutors (e.g. their cultural background, language skills, intercultural skills, education, etc.), purpose of communication, the role of emotions in the process, cognitive skills and many more.

> Not much, however, is known about learners' awareness of their intellectual fundament on which communication can be developed. Empirical studies focus mainly on accuracy and fluency issues as well as anxiety and willingness to communicate, while very few research projects allow students to reflect on other difficulties they face during spoken interaction (Komorowska, 2022: 131).

Mediation as defined in *The CEFR Companion Volume* presents a clear set of descriptors; however, it requires a thorough analysis, close reading and interpretation. In fact, descriptors overlap and complement each other to cover as many as possible aspects of the complex nature of communication.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to signal the potential of including mediation focused activities for a variety of purposes in the English Studies syllabi: whether to mediate texts, ideas or communication. However innovative it may seem, the focus on teaching mediation skills at the tertiary level of education brings new opportunities for program planning and modifications, the opportunities that are very likely to improve the quality of teaching. English Studies programs aim at providing qualifications for graduates who are global citizens, who can use transferable skills on different job markets, in different cultural, economic, social and political contexts.

> Only mediation can ensure mutual understanding and open the way to effective communication. People with developed mediation competences become desirable employees, because they can work effectively in a multilingual and multicultural environment. (Janowska, Plak, 2021: 145)

Mediation in intercultural communication, negotiations, legal disputes, international relations, and conflict resolution has been taught across academia for a number of years, with many degree courses across the world. Linguistic mediation, on the other hand, is a relatively new topic in academia. Since linguistic mediation operates on two levels, interlingual and intralingual, it is much more fundamental and universal. "It is a much more complicated process, implying also social, cultural, cognitive potential of language users" (Janowska, 2017: 80). Gerwers et al (2022) claim that mastering mediation skills boosts "plurilingual and intercultural competences […] at several levels:"

- social and affective level: learning to understand different perspectives and to decenter from one's own;
- linguistic level: learning how to navigate through one's linguistic repertoire, to share and to build it collaboratively;
- communicative level: learning how to combine languages and other semiotic resources to build bridges between interlocutors; to manage interaction, by negotiating communication turns and making the linguistic and communicative contact explicit;
- cognitive level: refreshing one's own knowledge of different languages through language comparison and simultaneous use, and developing such knowledge through mediation strategies. (Gerwers, Gauci, Liontou, Melo-Pfeifer and Stathopoulou, 2022: 3)

To clarify the nature and role of mediation, let's hypothesize about the future of translation and mediation. We can say that while

human translation may be one day eliminated by artificial intelligence, mediation is very unlikely. Moreover, multilingual, global and technologically conditioned channels of communication enforce effective collaboration through language and require specialists who enable everyday contacts. These specialists cannot be just language users. They must be highly qualified literate foreign language (human) agents. Therefore, teaching mediation skills to English Philology students is a necessity nowadays, and teaching communication skills in a foreign language with the use of descriptors for mediation is a strategy that will help us confront the challenges that our times bring.

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