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## ***Linguistic mediation in EFL teacher education: Presentation and preliminary evaluation of the course***

The article presents the preliminary evaluation of a course aimed at the implementation of the teaching of mediation (by designing information and communication technology-based (ICT) authorial materials) into the program developed for EFL teacher trainees at SWPS University. The pilot implementation took place in the academic year 2024/25 and has brought valuable insights into needs from the perspectives of the lecturer/ author of the syllabus, teacher trainer and students – course participants, on the basis of which recommendations are made with reference to course effectiveness. The article presents a model of implementing mediation-oriented strategies and activities into an EFL pre-service teacher education program, presenting results, and opinions based on its first version, conclusions, and recommendations for the future.

**Keywords:** linguistic mediation, English Philology studies, information and communication technology-based authorial (ICT) materials, pre-service EFL teacher training

**Słowa kluczowe:** mediacja językowa, filologia angielska, materiały autorskie z wykorzystaniem technologii informacyjno-komunikacyjnych (TIK), kształcenie nauczycieli języka angielskiego



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## 1. Introduction

The inclusion of mediation in the 2020 *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – Companion Volume* (CEFR CV) has had serious consequences for language curricula, coursebooks and exams design. “Redefined, it [mediation] constitutes a kind of innovation in glottodidactics, but also an important source of reflection on the dimensions of the process of teaching and learning foreign languages” (Janowska, 2017: 80; own trans.). Therefore, it requires foreign language teacher trainees to familiarize themselves not only with the conceptual framework related to linguistic and cultural mediation, but also with its practical applications in a variety of professional contexts. The broader perspective of implementing linguistic mediation into the program of English philology was described in the article “Developing mediation skills at the tertiary level of education” (Gadomska, 2024). The present article presents preliminary evaluation of the innovative course *Linguistic Mediation in Practice*, addressed to the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) specialization of the English Studies program, whose pilot implementation took place in the academic year 2024/25. Although the study presented is rather exploratory and not fully experimental in design, it has brought valuable insight into complex nature of teaching mediation skills to EFL teacher trainees.

## 2. Research questions and methodology

The aim of the research was to address the following research questions: 1. To what extent does the *Linguistic Mediation in Practice* course enhance TEFL trainees’ conceptual understanding and practical application of linguistic mediation skills? 2. How can students be assisted in their understanding of the concept of mediation? 3. How should the course in question, be tailored so it is effective for the future professional careers of EFL teachers? Therefore, the evaluation process intended to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot course design and possible future modifications. The course evaluation was conducted at the end of the semester through the standard university course evaluation form (anonymous), but also by peer evaluation (data collected from the forum led by the student/author of each module) and through observation and discussion.

### 2.1. *Linguistic Mediation in Practice* – course description and objectives

The course *Linguistic Mediation in Practice* is an obligatory course for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate English Studies students at SWPS University in both

the day and weekend versions (30 hours/ 20 hours respectively). Its syllabus was designed by the author and was preceded by several pilot attempts to include mediation into the practice of designing and using teacher authored materials (see Gadomska, 2022). *Linguistic Mediation in Practice* employs a “learning by doing” approach; therefore, the majority of classes take place in a computer room, where students design Moodle-based authorial materials for TEFL, the aim of which is to develop selected mediation skills, such as: explaining and interpreting verbal and non-verbal texts in intercultural communication (“Course description”). The design process is followed by micro-teaching with the use of an IWB, discussion and self-reflection. The course is integrated with other specialization courses, including: *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)* and *Methods and Techniques of TEFL* (“Course description”).

The course learning outcomes define the following objectives:

- The student has an advanced knowledge of the concepts of linguistic mediation (according to the *CEFR Companion Volume*) which allows them to describe the functioning of the linguistic system and explain both its properties and the phenomena characteristic of it, as well as the nature of the complex interdependencies between them;
- The student understands the practical applications of linguistic and cultural mediation methods and theories in English language classes, outside the educational context, and in the workplace;
- The student understands the practical applications of text mediation, including cultural texts, particularly applied, literary, and scientific texts in English, relevant to the professional activities of philologists in relation to foreign language teaching;
- The student is able to search for, critically analyze, and select information from various sources and media, also utilizing mediation strategies and techniques, to reliably and effectively perform typical tasks related to the professional activity of a philologist;
- The student is able to analytically and critically interpret linguistic texts and cultural phenomena, also in collaboration with others, and use online communication tools within the scope of the professional activity of an English teacher;
- The student is able to utilize knowledge of applied linguistics to perform activities typical of an English teacher, i.e., substantively select and adapt selected materials and media to the needs of teaching linguistic mediation, including in a multicultural environment, utilizing the functionality of educational platforms and other ICT tools;

- The student is able to plan and organize individual and team work, assuming various roles (author, reviewer) and collaborating with others while maintaining openness and tolerance towards representatives of other cultures and social groups (“Course description”).

In the course description, relating to designing authorial materials, the following requirements are specified:

Each module/lesson should contain:

- A file with description of the module, lesson aims, and the learner, (age and level of linguistic competence),
- A table that summarizes the module content (including CEFR descriptors for each activity),
- Warm-up activities,
- Reading comprehension exercises,
- Listening comprehension exercises (optional),
- Writing assignment (for homework),
- A handout/ link to an external source on the theory about the chosen element/s of the language or/and skills,
- Learning quizzes, including activities on mediation (mediating a text, mediating concepts, mediating communication) with the use of mediation strategies,
- Testing quiz (or assignment),
- Feedback forum.

The module should be available for the following scenarios of teaching:

- scenario 1: 100% self-study,
- scenario 2: 100% online,
- scenario 3: blended (traditional classroom + Moodle obligatory or optional),
- scenario 4: traditional classroom (a) with Interactive Whiteboard b) without any ICT).

While the project on the university Moodle-based platform comprises 70% of the final course grade, the remaining 30% of the assessment consists of a presentation, with elements of micro-teaching (“Course description”).

## 2.2. Course implementation

The first practical implementation of mediation tasks in English lessons, i.e. the creation of the original materials, including micro-teaching and self-reflection, was conducted in the 2024/25 academic year on the SWPS University e-learning platform *Learn Online*. A total of 32 students participated in two course groups (one weekday and one weekend, consisting of international students from:

Turkey, Ukraine, Poland, Belarus; students with mixed family backgrounds, with experience in working, travelling or studying abroad (for example, in Norway, Denmark, Spain, or Italy), students studying two languages (English-Korean, English-Chinese, English-Japanese). Therefore, for these participants, mediation tasks were natural elements of everyday social interaction.

The teacher had the status of online course manager, a role allowing her to assign the status of “teacher” to course participants so that they could edit their own modules, which were virtual spaces for content creation (lessons). To fulfil course objectives, students mostly used the following resources and activities on the Moodle: assignment, game, choice forum, quiz, file, URL (i.e. linking to online material), text and media area, glossary, page, etc. The most frequently chosen question types for quizzes were the following: drag and drop, true/false, multiple-choice, and matching.

Each module corresponded to an individual lesson, with the focus on practicing linguistic mediation. Students were required to choose the topic, and content, targeted at a given level of linguistic competence. The implemented “learning by doing approach” is in line with “action-oriented approach” (Council of Europe, 2020) as it requires that students first select descriptors from the CEFR CV and then create their own materials for TEFL. In such a way they build their understanding about the complex nature of particular descriptors by designing tasks aimed at practicing the corresponding language and communicative skills. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator, managing the project, providing practice and tools necessary for content creation, and directing students through the stages of the process. This approach reflects Janowska and Plak’s description of the role of the FL teacher in the action-oriented approach:

Their role is not to impart knowledge, but to support students in moving through the stages of acquiring the target language. They design activities, identify sources of information, and clarify difficult issues, while students—by actively participating in the process—negotiate and acquire knowledge and skills. In today’s diverse world, learners are often multilingual and multicultural. With such competencies, these students can draw on their full linguistic resources, if necessary. (Janowska, Plak, 2021: 44)<sup>1</sup>

The course participants were in the unique position of being both language learners and teacher trainees, with some already experienced in teaching EFL. This dual perspective allowed for a focus on self-reflection, problem solving and collaboration, which in turn resulted in reflective practice and increased student engagement.

<sup>1</sup> Author translation from Polish.

The selection of topics by students, the requirement to identify and then use CEFR descriptors to design original tasks based on the selected materials, engaged course participants in the learning process both in a natural and professional context. This is in line with the CEFR CV approach of treating students as social agents involved in the learning process also by the application of descriptors as a means of communication. It “implies purposeful, collaborative tasks in the classroom, the primary focus of which is not language. ... Descriptors can be used to help design such tasks and also to observe and, if desired, to (self) assess the language use of learners during the task” (Council of Europe, 2020, cited in North, 2022: 9). The selection of descriptors for mediation for the project was based on *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) as well as the selection of other communicative language activities and strategies, communicative language competences, plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Students had to match their module objectives with the target group needs and choose the relevant CEFR CV scale, taking into consideration the aim of each planned task. The modules had to use authentic, relevant and interesting content that focused on teaching intralingual and interlingual mediation in the context of TEFL. The whole process was divided into stages with the teacher specifying objectives for each stage, allowing feedback provision, formative assessment and creative revision, and subsequent content development. The teacher played the role of facilitator and course manager. Special attention was given to the formulation of instructions, collaboration, copyright issues, mutual respect, etc.

The 2024/25 edition of the course brought a selection of interesting topics, including: food, international cuisine, traveling (to China, Korea, Japan, Sweden, Norway), culture (film, dance, music, art), hobbies (sports, animals, video games, nature), work (the economy), studying abroad. The topics reflected student experience both in and outside academia, their background, interests and needs, i.e. authentic and self-experienced contexts for the use of mediation. As Dendrinos claims,

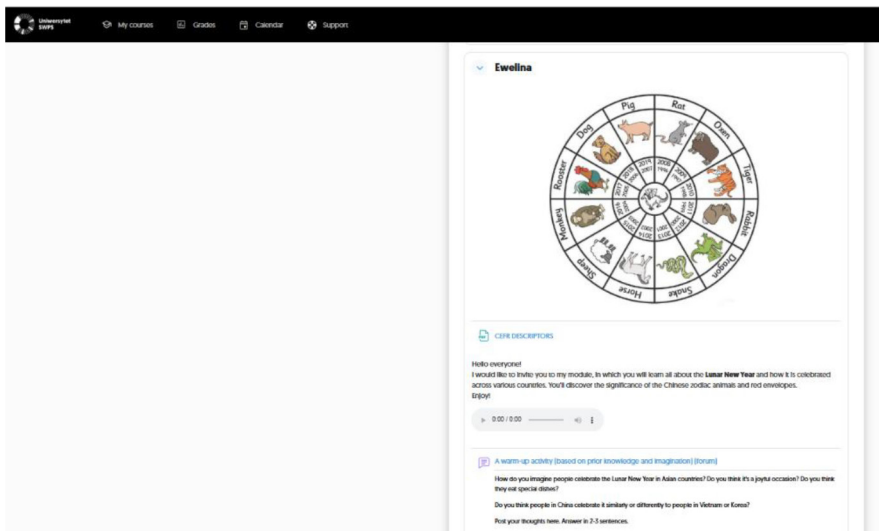
Undoubtedly, mediation is linked to the notion of cultural awareness regarding the social, linguistic and discourse practices as well as the norms of social groups within a community but also the notion of cultural awareness across languages and cultures, which involves an understanding of both our own and other cultures, and particularly the similarities and differences between them. (Dendrinos, 2024: 3)

The tasks designed by students included: communication in restaurants, workplaces, communication between colleagues, friends, family

members, etc. They involved explaining graphs, trends and data, menus and recipes, traditions and habits, hobbies and interests. However, in mediation what is needed is the application of the explained information in various contexts, which involve cooperation: co- and re-construction of meaning, negotiation of meaning, etc.

Planning and conducting a full course devoted to mediation was innovative, challenging, yet rewarding. It, in fact boosted the trainer's relational mediation and trainees' cognitive mediation awareness and skills. Kucharczyk (2020: 6; own trans.) identifies relational mediation as "the ability to manage interpersonal relationships in order to create a climate that facilitates cooperation during task completion," and cognitive mediation as "a skill that helps the interlocutor understand texts or behaviors that they themselves do not understand or are unfamiliar with".

Since it is impossible to discuss all of the student authored materials, one module ("Ewelina's module") has been selected to illustrate EFL content development, with the focus on teaching mediation skills. The module is interesting, coherent and rich in mediation-based tasks (Fig.1).



**Figure.1 Ewelina's module: "The Lunar New Year". Scan of the introduction to student module**

Source: <https://learnonline.swps.edu.pl/course/view.php?id=5735>

The author is a student of English Studies with a Polish-Chinese family background. The aim of the module is to introduce the topic of celebrations of the Lunar New Year, Chinese zodiac signs, and the tradition of giving red envelopes. As far as language objectives are concerned, by the

end of the module, learners will have practiced: mediating the most interesting points of a video or text, explaining their choices to another person, discussing their preferences, influencing others to change their point of view, and translating basic words between Chinese, English, and Polish. The module is designed for students at the B1 level of English (“Student presentation”).

The following table presents the selected activities from “The Lunar New Year” module aimed at practicing mediation skills.

**Table 1. Selected activities from the student module with the focus on mediation (based on Ewelina’s module content)**

| Task                            | Instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | CEFR CV scales – focus on mediation and plurilingual and pluricultural competence (B1) <sup>2</sup>                                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up forum                   | How do you imagine people celebrate the Lunar New Year in Asian countries? Do you think it’s a joyful occasion? Do you think they eat special dishes?<br>Do you think people in China celebrate it similarly or differently to people in Vietnam or Korea?<br>Post your thoughts here. Answer in 2-3 sentences.                                                                          | Linking to the previous knowledge<br>Collaborating to construct meaning                                                                    |
| Reading /writing assignment     | Read the text about the Lunar New Year once again. Imagine you have a friend named Maks. Maks knows nothing about the traditions of the Lunar New Year but is curious. The next Lunar New Year is just weeks away, and you want Maks to celebrate it with you. After reading the text, how would you describe the traditions to him in the most interesting way?<br>Write 3-4 sentences. | Facilitating pluricultural space<br>Relaying specific information<br>Processing text                                                       |
| Reading and speaking assignment | You want to celebrate the Chinese New Year at an Asian restaurant. Your friend Antoni wants to join you. There are two problems:<br>1. Antoni hates pork and beef, and you can only order one dish.                                                                                                                                                                                      | Acting as an intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues)<br>Translating a written text<br>Plurilingual comprehension |

<sup>2</sup> All scales from <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>.

| Task                                          | Instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | CEFR CV scales – focus on mediation and plurilingual and pluricultural competence (B1)                             |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                               | <p>2. The menu is in English, and Antoni doesn't speak English.</p> <p>Record and upload 2-3 sentences explaining to Antoni in Polish which dish you would like to choose for both of you to share, and which restaurant serves the most suitable options. Use the linked Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese menu lists.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                    |
| Writing assignment (to be used in discussion) | <p>Imagine your friend Maks wants to learn about the Chinese zodiac animals. He doesn't know anything about this topic yet.</p> <p>1. Knowing your friend was born in the year 2000, tell him what their zodiac animal is.</p> <p>2. Ask if they like this animal or if they would prefer a different one.</p> <p>Write 2 sentences. Upload your notes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Building on plurilingual repertoire</p> <p>Relaying specific information</p> <p>Encouraging conceptual talk</p> |
| Watching the video                            | <p>Take notes while watching the video on the most interesting facts about giving and receiving a red envelope. Keep it short. Write more or less 3-4 sentences. Upload your notes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Mediating a text: note talking (lectures, seminars, etc.)</p>                                                   |
| Writing assignment                            | <p>Your friend Maks wants to put 444 dollars into a red envelope. It's a lot of money but sometimes less is more. Based on the list of the meaning of numbers below, try to convince him it's better to put 388 or even 288 dollars than 444 dollars into a red envelope.</p> <p>1 = unity</p> <p>2 = harmony</p> <p>3 = stability</p> <p>4 = death</p> <p>5 = I/me</p> <p>6 = good luck</p> <p>7 = mystery</p> <p>8 = wealth, success</p> <p>9 = longevity</p> <p>Write 3-5 sentences. Save your document and upload it here.</p> | <p>Explaining data</p> <p>Facilitating pluricultural space</p>                                                     |

Source: <https://learnonline.swps.edu.pl/course/section.php?id=31773>.

The module ends with the obligatory test and a forum for peer evaluation of the module.

Ewelina's module concept utilizes various mediation activities and strategies. The student showed not only knowledge, but also teaching skills, involving linguistic, intercultural, social mediation. The module activities involve both: intra-linguistic mediation (for example, to explain, rephrase, summarize, interpret, record, etc.) and cross-linguistic mediation (translate, manage the information exchange and flow, negotiate the meaning, intervene in the information exchange, etc.).

### **3. Findings and discussion**

Course evaluation was conducted at the end of the semester through peer evaluation (data collected from the forum provided in each module by the student), and through teacher observation and class discussion. Criteria for evaluation of the modules were provided. As the number of students who provided individual feedback on the forum required in each student's module was smaller than expected (seven out of 32), more data was collected through university standard course evaluation forms (anonymous) – particularly through the optional “comments” section. The majority of students returned the forms. Their comments were optional and referred to their general opinion about the course and the teacher. Therefore, in the next course evaluation, it is planned to provide independent course evaluation questionnaires instead of the student feedback forum to collect deep qualitative insights and to maximize response rates. Notes were taken during the process of teacher observation and class discussion which took place in student micro-teaching sessions. These provided valuable data.

In 2025 the qualitative findings showed that most students considered using the mediation descriptors for the design of state-of-the-art materials as practical and engaging, but also a challenge. The course was rated very highly by students (with one group giving the top rating). Not surprisingly, there were a few critical opinions (such as that the course was monotonous and could be shorter). The hands-on experience, which also included micro-teaching with the use of the IWB, was considered very practical, interesting and deepening the understanding of mediation. Students were engaged in content design, cooperation with their colleagues, in provision of answers to quizzes (for example, giving summaries in language B of the original text in language A). Designing activities on the e-learning platform was a novelty for students. They had never before been given access to the Moodle platform as “teachers” with editing rights. Although Moodle may seem to

students to be an outdated platform, being the most popular and reliable Learning Management System (LMS), it is ideal for training practices. It is safe and has enormous methodological potential, offering software tailored for educators. The e-learning platform provides an engaging and safe virtual space for a community of practice, enabling collaboration, instant feedback and provision of know-how, in an authentic and innovating teaching context. ICT-based authorial materials focus on immediate and fast access to and retrieval from vast repositories, enable self-study, individualization, repetition, and reflection, build research skills, sensitivity to copyrights issues, and teach the student how to be “a good digital language learner” (as defined by Turula, 2016). Nevertheless, some students objected to the use of the Moodle platform: “Creating a lesson in Moodle was fun and informative, but Moodle isn’t a very popular platform anymore and it would be great to be trained in other online teaching platforms that are used broadly nowadays” (course participant).

Another challenge was mentioned by one of the participants in the module feedback forum: “Mediation is not an easy concept to grasp in all its facets, and matching descriptors relevant to online practices to a particular task is not always straightforward.” In fact, Stathopoulou observes that adjusting the content and the language to the genre of the target task is one of the pivotal aspects and objectives of designing mediation activities. Teachers must take into consideration features of the authenticity, linguistic and cognitive load of text/s, their format and applicability (Stathopoulou, 2025: 71), which is an even greater challenge for teacher trainees.

Therefore, the question of how to support students in their understanding of the concept of mediation arises. Solutions can include: relying on a sample/model exercise, focusing on the simplest aspects of mediation (summarizing, translation, note-taking). One way to help students is to share available scenarios and recommendations, such as the resources prepared by coursebook publishers, and experts, including the METLA Project of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (“Mediation in teaching, learning and assessment. How foreign language teachers in primary and secondary education can include (cross)linguistic mediation in their teaching practices” <https://www.ecml.at>). The METLA project focuses on cross-linguistic mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural language competences, and corresponding mediation strategies. METLA tasks constitute scenarios for learning different languages and boosting learner creativity, digital skills, critical thinking, etc. (Stathopoulou, Melo-Pfeifer, in press, cited in Stathopoulou, 2025: 70). The platform also offers other resources and materials, including teaching guides, bibliography, observation sheets, recommendations, among others. One of the difficulties encountered while

preparing authorial materials for teacher trainees was in planning the stages of the process. The METLA experts present two sets of options: I. 1. Identification of the goal of the task 2. Focus on proficiency level 3. Isolation of the corresponding CEFR CV descriptors 4. Task design; II. 1. Focus on proficiency level 2. Goal identification, 3. Task design, 4. Isolation of the corresponding CEFR CV descriptors (Stathopoulou 2025: 73). In the first edition of the course in question, the Author utilized the following order: 1. Identification of the task goal/ user needs, 2. Focus on proficiency level, 3. Isolation of the CEFR CV descriptors, 4. Task design. The chosen option matches the course objectives as it supports the process of student understanding of the cognitive complexity of mediation. Other challenges may include: technical problems, mixed-ability and mixed-previous experience of cultures and work in groups.

The intention for the next editions of the course is therefore, to include provision to encourage student feedback, to implement solutions based on experiences from the first edition, to share model authorial materials, to test other ICT-based platforms (such as Google Classroom) and to collect more substantial feedback from teacher trainers and academic teachers.

#### 4. Conclusions

Mediation is the everyday practice of all teachers. Kucharczyk (2020:7) observes that irrespective of the cultural and language context, education involves dynamic interaction between all parties; therefore, it involves mediation on multiple levels: transmission of knowledge, organization of the learning process, regulation of emotions, solutions to cognitive and pedagogical challenges. Although *The Decree of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 25 July 2019 on the standard of education preparing for the teaching profession* mentions pedagogical mediation, the learning outcomes do not directly refer to linguistic mediation. Nevertheless, “it is logically part of teacher qualifications in the area of language didactics and socio-cultural competences” (Gadomska, 2023: 184). It is undeniable that linguistic mediation, included in the Polish core curriculum for foreign languages at different levels of education, must be addressed in the EFL teacher education program at the tertiary level of education. The “learning by doing” approach presented here seemed to effectively acquaint future teachers of English with the complex nature of mediation by building student intercultural awareness, empathy, and cooperation, while using their creativity, ICT skills and real-life experience.

This approach also boosts reflectivity, another important teacher skill, and in fact relies on reflective practice, defined by Reiman as “a process of

problem solving, reconstruction of meaning, and subsequent reflective judgments while persons are engaged in significant new activity” (1999, cited in Gabryś-Barker, 2012: 93). According to Gabryś-Barker, the seven characteristics of reflective practice by Pollard and Tann (1990, 2005) “include the qualities of teachers being open-minded and actively involved in the instructional process, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, collaborating with others” (Gabryś-Barker, 2012: 93). The process includes creative mediation, which “enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning” (Pollard, 2005, cited in Gabryś-Barker 2012: 94).

Moreover, mediation involves conscious effort and strategies whose primary focus is not the language, but the effectiveness of communication. Piccardo (2020) states that language is a process rather than a product, “in which individuals engage both when they use it and when they learn it” (cited in Dendrinis, 2024: 40). Similarly, the complex nature of mediation can be understood most effectively in (simulations of) real-life practices, which is particularly important for teacher trainees.

The pilot edition of the course showed that mediation was more natural and approachable for students with multilingual/multicultural experience, and for students with previous work experience. This offers clear evidence why mediation has found its way into education and European language politics. Linguistic mediation in the CEFR CV and the action-oriented approach meet the needs of the current language learner. The latest validation of descriptors is the result of socio-political changes, the scale of migration and mobility, and the development of modern communication media and technologies (Janowska, Plak, 2021). Linguistic mediation in a multilingual and multicultural world is not an option, it is a skill that requires critical and creative thinking, but also a practical and individual approach that must be included in teacher qualification programs.

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