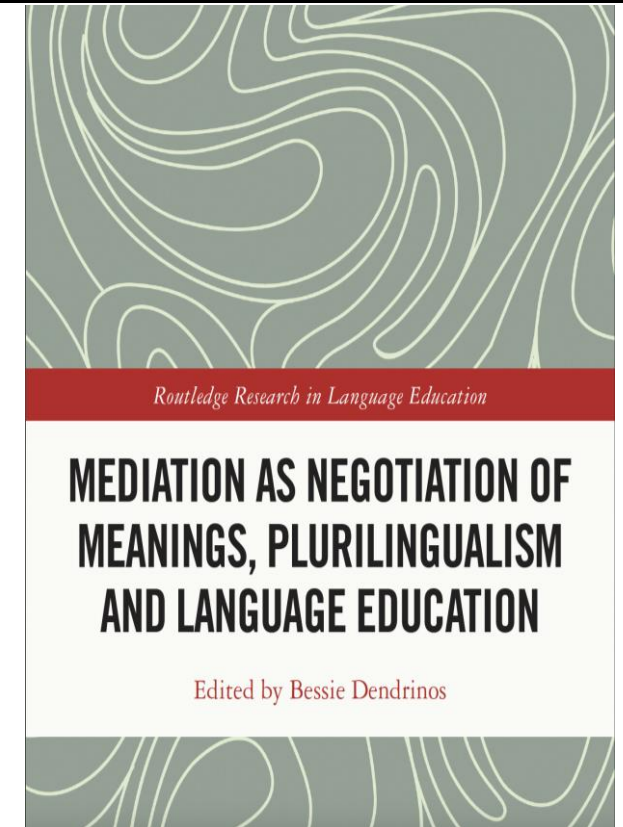


# **MEDIATION AS NEGOTIATION OF MEANINGS FOR PLURILINGUALISM**

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**Bessie Dendrinou, Johann Fischer & Kia Karavas**



**API Education Forum Event Series**

**First session: Book launch**

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# What is this book about?

- It builds on the concepts of linguistic and cultural mediation and the cultivation of plurilingualism – a plurilingual ethos of communication.
- It's the first book to be published exclusively on the theory and practice of mediation, involving linguistic and cultural negotiation of meanings during encounters of mediation across and within the same language.
- European authors from very different academic and linguistic backgrounds discuss theoretically informed views on mediation, their research project outcomes and present:
  - how mediation is incorporated in educational practices
  - how it materializes in social contexts.

# A key aspect of the book

- The distinction between mediation as **curricular content** and mediation as **social practice** is significant and permeates the book and related research.
- **Curricular content**: that is, an element to be taught, assessed and tested in educational contexts (for the development of plurilingual competence)
- **Social practice**: a term that refers to everyday linguistic and non-linguistic actions and the way these are typically and habitually performed society. Note that practice theory in the context of social sciences refers to a set of approaches that focus on studying people's actions and behaviours *within a social context*, and how these are formed, rather than their internal mental processes – social practices which are located in space, time, and meanings.

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# Division of (writing) labour

- In the first part of the book, the chapters create a mosaic of very different voices about why and how students should learn to mediate cross-linguistically and intra-linguistically.
- In the second part of the book, the chapters provide readers with an array of research findings regarding linguistic and cultural mediation practices in social context.

# Chapters 2-3

(authored by people who are with us this afternoon)

- **Chapter 2:** Enrica Piccardo, discusses mediation as a theoretical concept serving its construction as a catalyst for the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence and, hence, an important element for inclusion in the curriculum. She also emphasises the shift from thinking about language(s) as dynamic rather than static entities, and from thinking about a single or many languages to “languaging” our meanings using all our linguistic (and non-linguistic) repertoire – moves that help us capture the dynamic nature of mediation.
- **Chapter 3:** Brian North presents readers with the design rationale of the list of descriptors about what a language user/learner is expected to do as mediator at each one of the six levels of language proficiency, and explains the methodology used for the validation of the descriptors.

# Chapters 4-6

(authored by people who will present their work at our sessions)

- **Chapter 4:** Johann Fischer will tell us himself, this afternoon, how meaningful mediation tasks and scenarios can make language learning relevant to the learner at University Language Centres.
- **Chapter 5:** Elisabeth Kolb will tell us about the inclusion of mediation in the German educational standards and final exams in English and French – but not today, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of this Forum, on the 7<sup>th</sup> November.
- **Chapter 6:** Kia Karavas and I have co-authored this case study which can be used as a model for the inclusion of linguistic mediation in language proficiency testing. Kia complete today's session as she talks about how mediation was developed as a testing construct; how it was conceptualized and operationalized in the Greek national FL exams.

# Chapters 7-8

- **Chapter 7** is an important ‘transit’ chapter leading to the second part of the book, as Dolors Masats, Emilee Moore and Almudena Herrera report on the plurilingual and multimodal interactional practices of secondary EFL students in Catalonia, engaged in computer-mediated pedagogical tasks outside the school context.
- **Chapter 8**: Still on the subject of teaching and testing mediation, but interested in investigating mediation practices, Maria Stathopoulou presents readers with findings from linguistic analysis of EFL learners’ scripts produced as a response to carrying out cross-linguistic mediation test tasks. Her findings strongly suggest that the source text (in language A) regulates learners’ scripts (in language B), resulting in hybrid formations at the level of discourse, genre and text – the lexicogrammatical features of the script. In discussing her findings, she raises questions about linguistic hybridity as a natural outcome of plurilinguaging.

# Chapter 10

- **Claudio Baraldi, a sociolinguist who has researched and published widely on professional and non-professional cross-linguistic mediation for immigrants in the Italian healthcare system and other institutions, has contributed a stimulating chapter analysing mediated interactions between teachers and immigrant parents in Italian “multicultural schools”, in which intercultural mediators are employed with the explicit task to manage intercultural communication when interpreting. In particular, it focuses on mediated interactions between teachers and immigrant students’ parents regarding their children’s academic performance. The chapter presents analysis of four audio-recorded interpreter-mediated interactions between Italian teachers and Arabic-speaking parents.**

# Chapter 11

- **Elvira Hadžić builds on prior ethnographic research to investigate the ways in which youth of immigrant background use their home and the host-country language to cross-linguistically mediate for their families and community members. She synthesizes the research findings about how these youngsters effectively harness their plurilingual repertoire, negotiate meanings, and channel their sociocultural knowledge and cognitive skills to facilitate communication across language barriers for others in a purposeful manner. Crucial factors such as social domain and situational context of mediation performance, as well as the power dynamics among participants in the mediation encounters and the communities in which they operate are considered. The results offer insights into the context, situation and task specific mediation practices.**

# Chapter 9

- Chapter 9, like Chapter 12 and Chapter 1 (the introductory chapter) are a little different from the rest.
- In **Chapter 9** Loredana Polezzi, Alfonse M. D'Amato Chair in Italian-American Studies at Stony Brook University in NY, works in translation studies and has written on colonial and postcolonial literature, migrant and diasporic cultures, translingualism and self-translation. In her contribution to this book, she discusses *translation and its relationship with linguistic mediation*. She argues for a redefinition of translation as part of a continuum of practices which involve the ability to move between languages and across complex linguistic repertoires and discusses the fundamental role both translation and mediation practices can play in language education.

# Chapter 12

- **Thalia Dragona, a social psychologist and ex-Dean of the School of Education of the NKUA, co-led a pioneering multi-dimensional, longitudinal project, aiming at the education of Muslim minority children in Thrace, in conditions that are unique to this sociopolitical context. In her contribution to the book, she focuses on the role of negotiation of differences and new ways of meaning-making through linguistic and cultural mediation in the multilingual society of Thrace where walls have been erected around ethnicities and communities – the majority population being Greek-speaking Christians, and the minority being Turkish, Pomak and Romani speaking Muslims. Throughout the project, mediation was used to facilitate understanding within and across cultures and languages, as people from different social groups were engaged in dialogic practices, negotiating meanings to arrive at a mutual understanding and collaborative interaction, in a divided society, a divided educational system – resulting from a dissonance embodying a long-standing conflict in the political, cultural, and public spheres. This chapter brings to light mediation practices that highlight the introduction of a new ‘language’, moving away from the symmetric majority-minority discourses that have nurtured splitting, suppression of voices and coercive relations of power.**

# Back to the beginning: Chapter 1

- In a book concerning mediation and plurilingualism it seemed important to me that an analysis and critical review the key concepts that this volume deals with was inevitable. So, in the introductory chapter, I examine the notions of mediation and plurilingualism in relation and in opposition to other related terms. Plurilingualism is discussed at length and distinguished from the overriding concept of multilingualism, juxtaposed to monolingualism and bilingualism and linked to the practice of linguistic hybridity that is an inevitable consequence of cross-linguistic mediation and plurilinguaging – which is also examined extensively with a view to understanding the differences and similarities between plurilinguaging and the trendy term translanguaging.
- The compliments I got for this introduction by Enrica – who thinks that it is well-articulated, deep, and absolutely clear – but also from Brian pleased me.

# Endorsements

- Likewise, I have been delighted with the endorsements by:
  - Joseph Lo Bianco, Professor Emeritus, Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Australia
  - Monica Barni, Professor of Educational Linguistics, Department of Modern Languages and Culture, Università di Roma La Sapienza, Italy
  - Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer, Professor in Romance Languages Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hamburg, Germany

# In Joe Lo Bianco's words...

- **“This is a remarkable collection of important work on a topic of rapidly growing significance. [...] This collection is a standout example of going much further: it identifies not a gap but a chasm in competence-based understandings of mediation and explores, in a systematic and careful way, the theory and practice of demands of multicultural and multilingual life in diverse educational contexts. Underlying the need and inevitability of mediation is, in truth, a very big challenge, both to develop learners’ plurilingualism but also how related questions of how to understand and advance language rights in liberal democratic societies. [...] For European readers, the volume is an outstanding instalment in understanding how the aggregating experiment of Europe’s nation states is percolating to their education institutions, and, therefore, indispensable to their working lives. For readers beyond Europe’s borders, this compelling work will serve as a base of comparison, reflection and encounter with our peers and colleagues who are grappling with almost identical problems we face well beyond Europe’s border. The ‘cultural negotiation of meanings’ achieved across all contributions, and its excellent framing by the editor, make this volume a source of learning, reflection, and growth for us all.”**

# In the words of Monica Barni...

- **“This edited volume opens Pandora’s box with regard to mediation, an ability which is increasingly recognised as important in educational settings but needs even greater attention. Since very little has been written about the theory and practice of mediation in different educational and social contexts, this book is a must read both for researchers and language teachers to shed light on issues linked to this crucial ability [...]. This fundamental collection of contributions by renowned scholars in the field contributes to unfolding the construct of mediation and to explore how it can be operationalised in various dimensions of language education, traditionally anchored to a monolingual vision, such as, for instance, language testing. I’m strongly recommending this book as it acts as a courageous pathfinder on the analysis of a concept that will be much discussed in the coming years”.**

# In the words of Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer...

- “This exciting volume situates mediation at the crossroads of contemporary and competing concepts and discourses referring to language policies, language education and linguistic practices. With no intention of hiding the controversies and debates surrounding the concept and its pedagogical application across European contexts and beyond, all the chapters contribute to our understanding of the transformative potential of incorporating mediation into language education and testing. By revisiting the emergence of mediation as a recognised concept and a vibrant social and pedagogical practice, the authors convincingly argue for its political, educational and didactic significance [while the] editor [...] challenges longstanding ideologies in language education such as native speakerism and monolingualism [and] does an outstanding job of bringing together prominent European scholars to discuss the importance of cultivating and researching mediation”.