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# Mediation as Negotiation of Meanings, Plurilingualism and Language Education: A Book Review

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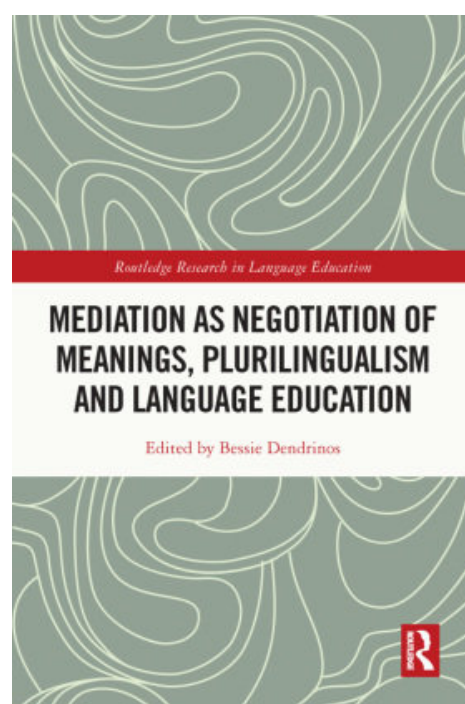
*Mediation as Negotiation of Meanings, Plurilingualism and Language Education*. Edited by Bessie Dendrinos. Routledge, 2024. 276 pp. €118.7 (HBK), €40.69 (E-BOOK). ISBN: 978-0-367-46940-5 (hbk), 978-1-032-77871-6 (pbk), 978-1-003-03206-9 (ebk).

In contexts shaped by globalization, digitally mediated communication, and intensified mobility, language education has increasingly shifted away from the “native speaker” ideal toward developing communicators who can mobilize diverse linguistic and cultural resources (CEFR-CV, 2020).

Within this orientation, mediation, understood as meaning-making and the negotiation of understanding across languages and cultures, has become a central concern for pedagogy and assessment. It is explicitly foregrounded in the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe, 2020) and resonates with plurilingual perspectives (Piccardo, 2018).

The key challenge, however, is not definitional prominence but operational viability: translating CEFR-CV mediation descriptors into teachable tasks, coherent learning sequences, and defensible assessment practices. The central value of Dendrinos’ edited volume lies precisely in addressing this implementation problem by juxtaposing conceptual clarification with institutionally and pedagogically situated exemplars.

This review evaluates the volume along four criteria implicit in its own aims: (i) conceptual coherence and precision; (ii) quality of operationalization for pedagogy and assessment; (iii) empirical richness and relevance of illustrative contexts; and (iv) the extent to which the collection is integrated into a cumulative agenda for research and practice.



## Organization and Editorial Logic

The volume is organized into 12 chapters moving from theoretical foundations (Chs. 1–3), to institutional implementations (Chs. 4–9), and finally to ethnographic case studies in schools and communities (Chs. 10–12). This architecture is one of the book’s strengths: it frames mediation both as a curricular/assessment construct and as an everyday social practice, enabling readers to trace how the concept travels across levels of analysis.

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### Conceptual Contribution: Mediation as Negotiated Meaning and Plurilingual Agency (Chapters 1-3)

The opening section anchors the volume in a principled understanding of mediation as *dynamic negotiation of meaning* across languages and semiotic modes. Dendrinos' Chapter 1 establishes a productive conceptual distinction between plurilingualism (learners' dynamic repertoires) and multilingualism (coexisting discrete languages), and frames translanguaging as an agentic practice—an orientation that implicitly resists monolingual normativity in both pedagogy and assessment.

Piccardo's Chapter 2 extends the conceptual scope by treating language as "languaging" and "plurilanguaging" as an ambiguity-tolerant, agentive process grounded in Vygotskian theory; crucially, mediation is not confined to translation but encompasses text adaptation and intercultural brokering, thus positioning mediation as a broad set of interpretive and interactional practices.

North's Chapter 3 adds a further layer of conceptual consolidation by tracing the CEFR's evolution from four skills to four communicative modes that explicitly include mediation, and by articulating how an action-oriented approach can render mediation teachable across proficiency levels.

Taken together, Chapters 1-3 provide a coherent theoretical "grammar" for mediation: mediation is not simply an auxiliary skill but a mode of social action in which learners actively bridge meanings, resources, and perspectives.

### Operationalization: Curriculum Design, Assessment, and Mediated Interaction (Chapters 4-9)

Where the volume becomes particularly consequential is in its insistence that mediation is not only a theoretical construct but also an object of systematic curricular and assessment design. In this regard, the institutional section contributes by demonstrating how mediation can be embedded in concrete educational infrastructures: backward design for mediation-focused curricula (Ch. 4), as well as high-stakes national examinations (Germany's Abitur in Ch. 5; Greece's KPG exams in Ch. 6).

These chapters matter because they speak to the often under-documented interface between CEFR-informed constructs and large-scale assessment practice, thus strengthening the plausibility of mediation as an assessable component rather than an aspirational policy term.

The subsequent chapters widen the lens to mediated learning ecologies and alternative evidences of plurilingual competence. The discussion of technology as an active "partici-

part" in informal learning (Ch. 7) extends mediation beyond classroom boundedness, while the reframing of linguistic "hybridity" as competence rather than deficiency (Ch. 8) and the positioning of translation and mediation on a sociocultural continuum (Ch. 9) jointly reinforce the book's overarching stance: mediation is situated, relational, and inseparable from the social conditions under which communication occurs.

A notable strength here is that the volume does not treat pedagogy, design, and assessment as separate discourses: it explicitly links the action-oriented approach (Piccardo & North, 2019) and backward design (Richards, 2013) to the problem of teaching and testing mediation, and it frames this linkage as a "roadmap" for educators.

### Empirical Depth: Mediation as Everyday Practice and Institutional Tension (Chapters 10-12)

The closing section adds empirical depth by foregrounding mediation as a lived practice in schools and communities, and by making visible the institutional and affective dimensions that are often absent from policy-oriented mediation discourse. Baraldi's analysis of interpreter-mediated interactions in Italian schools (Ch. 10) highlights both the complexity of bilingual students' roles and a structural risk: without formal support, mediation may inadvertently reinforce institutional authority. Hadžić's study of immigrant adolescents in Germany (Ch. 11) adds an important psychosocial dimension by emphasizing emotional coordination and the dual impact of sustained informal mediation on development and well-being. Dragona's long-term transformative education project in Northern Greece (Ch. 12) complements these accounts by illustrating how intercultural mediation can produce "in-between" spaces that amplify marginalized voices and support educational equity.

Analytically, these chapters strengthen the volume's argument that mediation is not merely a classroom technique but a form of socially consequential participation—thereby expanding what counts as relevant evidence for mediation pedagogy and what kinds of institutional support structures may be ethically required.

### Strengths

Across the collection, the most convincing achievement is the sustained re-positioning of the learner as a social agent who "creates bridges" and participates in the negotiation and construction of socially situated meanings across and within languages.

By bringing together conceptual work by CEFR-CV architects with institutionally grounded examples and ethnographic cases, the volume effectively bridges theory and application,

making mediation legible as (a) a coherent construct, (b) a teachable and assessable pedagogical object, and (c) a social practice with ethical and affective dimensions.

## Limitations

The review's main reservations concern integration, scope, and actionable specificity. First, the collection would benefit from a concluding chapter that synthesizes the volume's diverse strands and articulates a clearer trajectory for research and practice. Second, the heavy focus on European contexts constrains transferability and underscores the need for culturally responsive frameworks that examine how distinct sociopolitical conditions shape mediation pedagogy. Third, although the chapters present compelling scenarios, they at times fall short of offering sufficiently detailed, actionable guidance, particularly with respect to the practical demands of technology-mediated work, such as resource allocation and the training required to support teachers in implementing these practices. Finally, the empirical chapters foreground a critical institutional gap: informal "everyday mediators" may carry significant emotional burdens when mediation practices lack recognition and support, suggest-

ing an urgent agenda for institutional frameworks that can responsibly accommodate such realities.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, *Mediation as Negotiation of Meanings, Plurilingualism and Language Education* offers a coherent, multi-level account of mediation that speaks directly to educators, teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers working within CEFR-informed and plurilingual paradigms. Rather than merely advocating mediation as a policy slogan, the volume shows how it can be theorized, translated into curriculum and task design, assessed within institutional frameworks, and investigated as a socially situated practice, while also indicating the areas where stronger synthesis and more context-sensitive operational guidance remain necessary.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

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