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Negotiation in Tertiary-level Educational Contexts: The Use of Mediation as a Mode of Communication in Military English Classes

Abstract: In 2018 the Council of Europe issued a document entitled ‘The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors’. The innovative feature of this publication was the change of focus from the four main linguistic skills; speaking, writing, reading and listening, to four modes of communication; production, reception, interaction and mediation. This shift and the subsequent important implications for the teaching and learning process, was dictated by the necessity to address dynamically the changing

socio-cultural texture of contemporary tertiary-level classrooms, which are typically comprised of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals who require new teaching and learning tools in order to achieve effective outcomes. The focus of the current paper is on the mediation mode, which entails the co-construction of meaning in the social and agentive exchange between students from various cultural, social and educational backgrounds. The paper presents an in-depth insight into the use of different mediation strategies and activities in Military English classes and the benefits of using mediation, for both cadets and their instructors/teachers. These benefits include aspects such as facilitation of the teaching and learning process, but also long-term advantages, such as building students' autonomy which they will benefit from in their lifelong learning process and future professional life. The final part of the article is dedicated to changes in teaching and learning practices that may be evoked by introducing the mediation mode of communication into Military English classes.

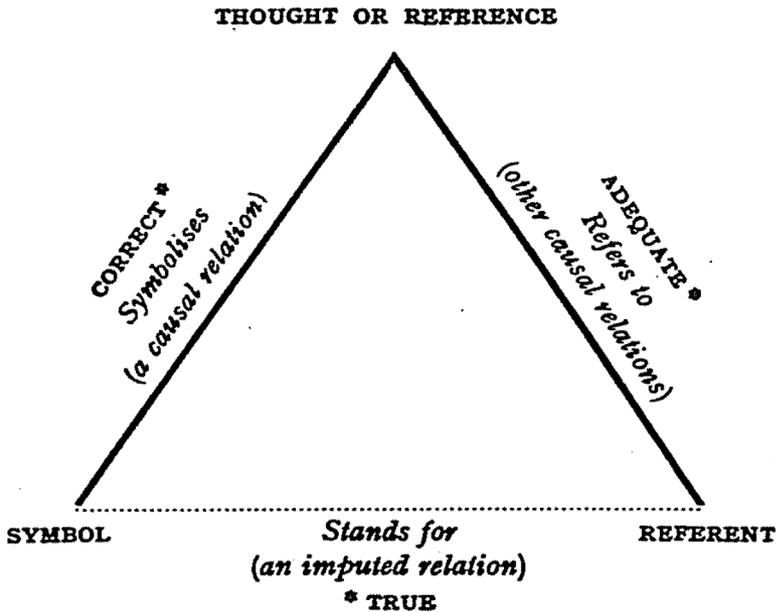
Keywords: negotiation, mediation mode, second language (L2) teaching and learning, autonomous learner, Military English

Introduction

Language is an arbitrary set of symbols used in the act of communication. In this process, verbal and nonverbal messages are inextricably intertwined to form verbal and visual code systems through which we convey our thoughts, ideas, attitudes and intentions along with underlying beliefs, values and worldviews. In order to get messages across, we select from a code system that we expect others to share with us and interpret in the same way we do. Viewing communication from such a perspective allows for messages to be conceptualized metaphorically as containers of meaning (see Lehman et al., 2020) and for communication to be understood as a social act performed to achieve anticipated results. However, even without getting into the arcane of semantics, it is not difficult to observe that a successful receipt

of the message is sometimes interfered with by misreading the *frame of reference*. Ogden and Richards' triangle of meaning (1923) shows how meaning is shared through language (see fig. 1).

Figure 1. Semiotic triangle



Source: Ogden, & Richards (1989/1923).

In Ogden and Richards' conceptualization of meaning, a communicator is referred to as *interpreter*, a *symbol* is anything we assign meaning to, and the *referent* corresponds to the object or concept that a symbol will evoke in the mind of an interpreter. When we act as interpreters, we anticipate our interlocutors to interpret the meaning of symbols precisely as we do. However, because of the culturally influenced semantic noise, that affects both encoding and decoding of the message, the message sent may not be the message received. For example, people have different interpretations of such concepts as freedom, individualism, identity or

democracy. In Western cultures these are positive concepts associated with independence, self-sufficiency, and assertiveness. Conversely, in East Asian or Middle Eastern cultures they bring to mind the feelings of selfishness and lack of concern for the group, which are negative characteristics in Eastern cultures traditionally associated with collectivistic values and group harmony and cohesion. Therefore, in order to avoid missing the *frame of reference* and ultimately, the formation of faulty referents in our minds we need to negotiate linguistic meanings.

Negotiation is not restricted, however, to the construction of meaning in intercultural exchange, but it is a common, everyday activity. In order to achieve our personal and professional goals, we attempt to influence others, whose goals are not always compatible with ours. Therefore, the ability to negotiate is a fundamental skill simply necessary for successful living. In professional contexts, such as business or academic settings, negotiators participate in organizational cultures whose values and behaviours create the unique social and psychological environment. For Ravasi and Schultz (2006), these organizational cultures establish patterns of collective behaviours and assumptions that new organizational members are expected to accept as a way of perceiving themselves and others and consequently, communicate according to institutionally sanctioned rules and norms.

The ever-growing international exchange in academic and other professional contexts in which English is used as a *lingua franca* has necessitated effective communication and hence competence in carrying out negotiations. This is a multilayered process which does not involve merely discussions of common and conflicting interests of the participants, but also includes self-evaluation and peer evaluation stages. As negotiations proceed, participants need to be very observant of changes from their initial expectations, analyze the differences, and adopt their negotiation strategy accordingly. Because of the complexity

of the factors involved in the negotiation process, the phenomenon can be analyzed from a variety of academic perspectives which cut across the fields of Psychology, Intercultural Communication, Management and Second Language Teaching and Learning.

The majority of the literature on negotiations and mediations across cultures consists of studies on social communication from individual cultures (Chmielecki, & Sułkowski, 2017; Kelly, & Kaminskienė, 2016; Todorova, 2016; Balkan, 2016). A considerable part of the studies provide recommendations on how to conduct negotiations in particular cultures as well as pointing out difficulties in negotiations relating to a given culture. Another stream of research focuses on comparing social communication styles and negotiation styles among different cultures. Many other studies analyze interactions among negotiators from two or more cultures (Chmielecki et al., 2014). However, no study concerning education in military HEI's in terms of mediation and negotiations has been conducted yet.

To fill this gap, the present paper is primarily focused on defining the mediation mode and its benefits in terms of learning and teaching Military English. The paper also addresses the need for elucidating how to use various mediation strategies and activities in Military English classes. Finally, the changes evoked by implementation of the mediation mode into the teaching and learning process are shown. All the above-mentioned aspects are presented bearing in mind the character of the contemporary, tertiary-level classroom, comprising of individuals with different backgrounds, social experiences and plurilingual repertoires, i.e. agents "who bring into the end product their own voice" (Dendrinos, 2014, p. 152, cited in Stathopoulou, 2015, p. 31).

Successful functioning in every military environment is linked with multicultural and multilingual contacts. Soldiers experience such encounters, for instance during military operations or when

participating in various NATO programmes. Thus, “soldiers [are required] to interact with individuals and groups whose cultural context differs from their own”, they are expected to “adapt successfully to any cultural setting” (Abbe et al., 2007, p. vii). In order to accomplish this requirement they are in need of acquiring cross-cultural competence. Cross-cultural competence is defined as “a set of knowledge, affect, and skill components that develop in response to experience, training and education” (Abbe et al., 2007, p. vii). Thanks to it individuals are able to “adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments” (Abbe et al., 2007, p. 2). Nowadays, military students operate in multicultural and multilingual environments already during their education. They can, for example, take part in various European initiatives for the exchange of military young officers. Such initiatives contribute to the creation of a modern and inclusive classroom.

Due to the above-mentioned factors, cadets need to demonstrate intercultural and multilingual competences. A competence is “the capacity to respond successfully to types of situations which present tasks, difficulties or challenges for the individual” using a “combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills” (Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 16). Thus, as Hubert and Reynolds argue (Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 16), intercultural competence is “a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills”, thanks to which individuals are able to understand and respect others with different cultural associations, behave properly in multicultural contacts and, finally, create positive attitudes and relationships between interlocutors. What is more, interlocutors, participating in context-dependent situations, use their whole pluricultural repertoire¹ ‘in a fluid manner’

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1. Pluriculturalism concentrates on user’s contact with different cultures, which “are compared, contrasted and actively interact” to make up his or her pluricultural competence (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 6).

in order to “actively construct and negotiate their own meanings and interpretations of the world” (Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 15). Intercultural competence is inextricably combined with plurilingual competence² as when communicating during intercultural encounters interlocutors need to use their whole plurilingual repertoire (Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 17). What is more, language competence is significant in cultural encounters, due to the fact that language plays a key role in them. Successful communication is unfeasible without language (Hubert, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 23). In other words, communication, its course and potential success, is conditioned by the languages and cultures presented by interlocutors. The intercultural, plurilingual and communicative competences complement each other, contributing to the creation of an autonomous user of the English language. It should be also borne in mind, that communication concerns not only the exchange of information, but also how the sent message, being a ‘performance of the culture’ (Zerate et al. 2004, p. 34), “will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context” (Byram, 1997, p. 3). That is why, successful communication is related to both the successful information exchange, and creating and maintaining relationships (Byram, 1997, p. 3).

Education, regardless of its form, i.e. formal, non-formal, informal, is aimed at helping people from various cultural backgrounds to coexist, understand each other and communicate (Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 9). Nowadays, multilingual and multicultural students require tools which enable them to communicate successfully, in spite of

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2. Plurilingualism is an approach focusing on the development of user’s experience of languages in its cultural contexts in order to build up her/his communicative competence in which languages interrelate and interact (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). Plurilingualism differs from multilingualism, which is the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). Multilingual competence concerns the user’s ability to apply a particular language, a mother tongue included, suitably for the situation to achieve successful communication (Council of Europe, 2018b).

their varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Mediation, which facilitates communication between interlocutors, may be such an effective tool in the contemporary classroom.

Mediation defined

Hearing the word mediation we immediately have an image before our eyes of two people (interlocutors) sitting in front of each other and shaking hands as they have reached an agreement thanks to the aid of the third, smiling person between them (a mediator). And this is, of course, a correct association, as mediation is a process where the parties with different points of views are assisted by someone who is not involved in their conflict, the mediator, who supports their decision-making in order to solve the conflict, using various techniques. Mediation is unique for the reason of its features, that is, two opposite parties are able to reach a consensus of opinion by making their own decisions without having them imposed. The mediator is a guide who just assists in that process without forcing parties to his/her own views (Boulle et al., 2008).

Mediation was present already in the times of great ancient civilisations, playing a role in commercial transactions and diplomacy (Stathopoulou, 2015, pp. 29–31). In African, Asian, South American cultures wise men were mediators that helped in contacts with other communities and explained phenomena (Stathopoulou, 2015, pp. 29–31). In Swiss, German and Japanese cultures there were mediators, judges, who helped to reach the agreement (Stathopoulou, 2015, pp. 29–31). Mediation had been present for years in societies, when finally, in 1970 the term ‘mediator’, an impartial individual participating in conflict resolution, appeared in the law and jurisprudence in the United States (Stathopoulou, 2015, pp. 29–31). However, the modern use of mediation

is related to numerous areas, for instance to diplomacy, solving conflicts, education, psychology, counselling, arbitration, psychology, education, culture.

In 2001 mediation was introduced, rather cursorily, in the document titled *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. According to this document, mediation “make[s] communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14). The mediator can be either a teacher or a student and his role is to explain the controversial issues clearly and move closer to mutual understanding.

Mediation was distinguished as a fourth mode of communication together with interaction, production and reception. It was a significant shift from the then, well-known four skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening), to four modes of communication. It should be borne in mind, that mediation meshes with all the remaining modes of communication (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 9). However, it was not until 2016 when the topic was taken up thoroughly by the scientific environment resulting in the publication of the document titled *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment Companion Volume with new descriptors* by the Council of Europe in 2018. An innovative and broad description of mediation activities and strategies was presented, as well as the description of common reference levels regarding mediation language ability. What is more, a division of mediation in relation to language teaching and learning was shown.

Types of mediation

With reference to education, there are four types of mediation, i.e. linguistic, cultural, social and pedagogic (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 13).

Cultural mediation takes place when a mediator relays the source culture to the target culture in order to make understanding between parties possible (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 13). It includes “understanding, explication, commenting, interpretation and negotiating various phenomena, facts, texts, behaviour, situations, feelings, emotions, etc., between people belonging to different cultures or subcultures” (Zerate et al., 2004, p. 103). Thus, it can be defined as “a set of attitudes, strategies and practical skills” which help to counteract prejudices, stereotypes, etc. (Zerate et al., 2004, p. 15). Cultural mediation is connected with cultural awareness, which is made up of recognition of idiolects, sociolects, various sub-cultures, styles and textual genres, etc. (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 13). According to Byram, critical cultural awareness is “an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997, p. 53). The next type is social mediation, which focuses on a language user, who acts as intermediary between parties, which do not understand each other, because otherwise communication between them would be impossible (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 14). There are numerous obstacles to mutual understanding. The most predominant is the unfamiliarity with the language, nevertheless there are also disparate expectations, points of view, lack of knowledge concerning social rules, etc. All these difficulties in understanding may be overcome by mediator’s actions. Pedagogic mediation takes place in teaching and is conducted not only by teachers, but parents as well. They endeavour to mediate knowledge, experiences and critical thinking (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 15). Bearing in mind the nature of the teaching process, pedagogic mediation contains the following aspects: (1) easing access to knowledge, exhorting users/learners to evolve their thinking (cognitive mediation: scaffolded), (2) cooperative co-constructing meaning within any type of collaborative task (cognitive mediation: collaborative), (3) establishing

the conditions for cognitive mediation (both scaffolded and collaborative) by preparing and managing space for creativity (relational mediation) (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 15). Finally, there is linguistic mediation which consists of (a) the interlinguistic dimension – it concerns translation and interpretation, and transforming a text, (b) the intralinguistic dimension – it concerns actions taken within the target or source languages, (c) the multilingual dimension – it concerns the alterable using of various languages (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 13).

It should be stressed that it is impossible to separate the above-mentioned types of mediation from each other. They should be mixed and combined whenever it is needed (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 106). It cannot be denied that, among various reasons for misunderstanding, and deterrents to communication, language plays the most pivotal role, being “a major mediating tool that facilitates thought and the construction of ideas” (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 18). However, in order to communicate successfully in the modern classroom and society (pluri)cultural and social dimensions of mediation must be taken into account.

Mediation in practice

Mediation makes “communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly” (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 9). A user/learner plays a role of a social agent who “creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning”, not only by reformulating a source text, inaccessible to a recipient (cognitive mediation), but also by “creating the space and conditions for communication” (relational mediation) (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 103). As mentioned before, in the classroom mediation can be conducted by both teachers and students. Mediation takes place in various contexts, for instance social, pedagogic, cultural or linguistic (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 103).

In The Common European Framework of Reference diverse mediation activities are presented. They are characterised by a common feature, i.e. a mediator cares about needs, meanings and ideas of the parties, for whom the text is mediated for, more than about his own (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 106). Mediation activities are divided into three categories: mediating a text, mediating concepts and mediating communication. Mediating a text involves relaying the content of the text to a person who, for any reason, cannot access it (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 106). Cadets may practise this activity in the form of taking notes at briefings, passing specific information from formal meetings, explaining data presented graphically on a map, translating concept of operations etc. The next category: mediating concepts, is processing knowledge and concepts for those who have no access to them (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 106). Mediating concepts takes place in collaborative work or when an individual acts as a facilitator, teacher or trainer. It should be emphasized that the construction and exchange of concepts (cognitive mediation) is not possible without creating favourable conditions this exchange (relational mediation) (Council of Europe, 2018a, pp. 117–118). Military students can practise mediation when collaborating in a group to solve a problem, e.g. to choose the best course of action to attack the enemy, to unblock the road blocked by hostile civilians, etc. As participants respect others' views and feelings, it is highly probable that a variety of ideas will arise. Developing mediating concepts may turn out to be significant for completing future collaborative tasks in the army, as avoiding conflicts, or the ability to tackle communication tensions is essential for successful communication. Students need to bear in mind the fact that the free exchange of ideas is not possible in a negative atmosphere of insensitive attitudes to others' views. Therefore, mediating concepts can be also improved when leading group work. A group of students might be tasked with preparing a visit

of a military attaché. A leader of the group is responsible for managing interaction between members (by giving clear instructions, checking understanding of objectives, monitoring work etc.) and encouraging them to exchange ideas (by asking questions, giving feedback, showing his/her interest in members' ideas) (Council of Europe, 2018a, pp. 120–121). The final category is mediating communication, when an individual acts as intermediary between parties. Misunderstandings and tensions while communicating are not always caused by the 'language' factor. They often arise since people are unaware of cultural differences or have no knowledge about a particular field concerned (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 122). This type of mediation is essential for cadets, due to the fact that in the future they will cooperate in the international environment. NATO itself allies 29 North American and European countries. In the classroom students may train mediating communication, for instance, by trying to explain nuances and undercurrents during a welcome speech for foreign guests or in a form of a dialogue aimed at solving disagreements between soldiers from different countries.

For being a competent teacher-mediator or learner-mediator one also needs to have a broad repertoire of mediation strategies, as they determine the positive or negative effect of the mediation process (Stathopoulou, 2015, pp. 17–19). These are “the techniques employed to clarify meaning and facilitate understanding” (North, & Piccardo, 2016, p. 31). These tools, used to maximise effectiveness of communication during the process of mediation, appertain to the above-presented mediation activities. In accordance with the CEFR the division is as follows: strategies to explain a new concept ((a) linking to previous knowledge by giving examples, providing definitions, asking questions concerning prior knowledge, etc., (b) adapting language by paraphrasing a complex content in simpler language, (c) breaking down complicated information by highlighting the main points, presenting the components

of the content separately, etc.), and strategies to simplify a text ((a) amplifying a dense text by elaborating information, adding helpful details, adding redundancy, modifying register, etc. (b) streamlining a text by eliminating repetition, non-relevant information, highlighting essential information, etc.). It should be borne in mind that the lists are not finite (Council of Europe, 2018a, pp. 126–129). They ought to be treated as guidelines for teachers, a set of possibilities for implementing it in Military English classes. Both teachers, and students who want to be good mediators, first need to acquire knowledge of mediation activities and strategies, then practice them as often as possible, in order to master them, and then implement in their learning and teaching process those which are the most effective in a particular context.

Benefits of Mediation

Both teachers and students may benefit from mediation in various ways. As Janowska argues, “Współczesna glottodydaktyka nie może obejść się bez mediacji” (2017, p. 85), [“contemporary glottodidactics cannot do without mediation” (translation mine)]. First of all, mediation enriches the learning and teaching process by offering numerous mediation strategies and activities, which may be implemented in the classroom. All mediation strategies “are communication strategies, i.e. ways of helping people to understand, during the actual process of mediation” (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 126), thus they are aimed at creating a successful communicative situation. Being knowledgeable about a vast range of mediation strategies, students and teachers possess tools useful for communication. What is more, their communicative effectiveness is creatively developed, as they get to know how to tackle the difficulties which may occur during communication. For instance, by developing a competence in the area of mediating communication, individuals gain

more aids to tackle communication tensions, and problems connected with cultural misunderstandings. At the same time, students and teachers' knowledge of other cultures is extended allowing them to successfully resolve communication tensions and problems connected with cultural misunderstandings. Finally, an individual willing to become a good mediator gets an opportunity to develop his/her emotional intelligence, as acquiring it is needed to "have sufficient empathy for the viewpoints and emotional states of other participants in the communicative situation" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 106).

Mediation should be treated as a tool used to explore students' potential, as they are able to exploit their plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires in various mediation situations (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 161). In practice, teachers should prepare tasks which enable students to use and develop their cultural and linguistic knowledge. For instance, the task may be given in L1, but the outcome should be presented in L2, or so as to complete a task students must obtain information on a different culture, etc.

Nowadays, Polish military students have an opportunity to participate in various European initiatives for the exchange of military young officers. After studies, as part of performing official duties or being on a mission, they cooperate with soldiers from around the world. Linguistic, social and cultural mediations help them to 'survive' and successfully deal with various experiences of otherness. Mediation supports cadets' and then professional soldiers' mobility, as "the social agent's mobility, understanding of otherness and inclusion in communities should be facilitated by different forms of mediation" (Coste, & Cavalli, 2015, p. 12).

When mediation is used in collaboration tasks, for instance to plan the emergency evacuation of casualties from a combat zone, more creative and suitable solutions to the problem possibly arise. During the

mediation process participants share their feelings (both positive and negative ones) and information in a positive atmosphere of cooperation (Council of Europe, 2018a, pp. 216–217), which supports the exchange of ideas. All these aspects favourably influence achieving success i.e. communication. This aspect is vital also in terms of future cooperation between soldiers. While collaborating, instead of competing, they look for mutual agreement on a solution of a problem. It also positively affects their relationships and builds trust between them.

Using the mediation mode in the communication process may also limit the time needed for reaching agreement. This may turn out to be crucial in the military environment, since sometimes rapid but correct decision-making determines people's lives. Mediation activities and strategies, once acquired, can be easily and naturally implemented in the different languages learning process, as the mediation mode is universal.

All above-mentioned factors may contribute to the "creation" of a 'social agent', i.e. an autonomous player (Coste, & Cavalli, 2015, p. 13) in the Military English classroom. The learner that will be able to communicate in English effectively and without assistance from others, and know how to overcome communication problems thanks to making use of mediation strategies. It is possible that such independence and control over the learning process may also evoke students' satisfaction with the learning process, strengthen their motivation for learning and enhance confidence in their own abilities in terms of communicating in Military English. It is worth mentioning that independence of the learner is also highly desirable as a key competence for lifelong learning recommended by the Council of the European Union (Council of Europe, 2018b).

Changes in contemporary classroom

Implementation of mediation mode of communication into Military English classes does not necessarily mean a need for drastic changes. Sometimes only small alterations or improvements need to be introduced. In terms of education both teachers, and students, can play a role of a mediator who creates the space and conditions for the process of communication. In order to use mediation techniques effectively, knowledge of the nature of the mediation phenomenon should be acquired first, and then various mediation strategies and activities ought to be implemented in the learning and teaching process. This will enable teachers and students to practice mediation as mode of communication in the classroom and learn which strategies work best in a particular context.

First of all, an approach to foreign language learning and teaching in which the language user plays a role of a mediator and so-called 'social agent' should be put into practice. Students ought to be encouraged by their teachers, or strive on their own, to become a social agent, who is defined as "an autonomous and responsible player with a plurality of communication skills and plurilingual and pluricultural experience" (Coste, & Cavalli, 2015, p. 13). In this approach, autonomy and engagement of the learner are promoted (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 26). Students are encouraged to take part in the learning process actively. At the same time, learners' plurilingual and pluricultural features are borne in mind, as using all their linguistic resources is not only allowed, but it is even desirable. What is more, like in real situations, outside the classroom, learners should use any method/tool in order to communicate effectively. All actions are acceptable so that users/learners can exchange information. That is why, during Military English classes with the mediation process, using a mother tongue is not forbidden (as some may still think), but even recommended, if it is

needed to facilitate communication. Nevertheless, the target language should occur mostly.

The demand for learner's autonomy, also promoted by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2018b) is by no means new, as such an outcome is highly desirable in the everyday teaching/learning practice. However, mediation sheds an innovative light on it. Firstly, students and teachers are equipped now with numerous mediation strategies and guidelines concerning mediation activities. Secondly, students are encouraged to use their plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires. Thanks to such an approach, individuals also learn how to communicate more autonomously in any situation. It is very important, as outside the classroom students must deal with communication problems without support of their teachers. The same situation will take place in their future jobs. That is why mediation is such an essential tool for the learning and teaching process.

What is more, both students and teachers broaden their knowledge of other communicative styles and in this way acquire unique skills of intercultural mediators which, as Zerata et al. (2004) argue, are critical in communicative language teaching and learning. Activities aimed at developing cultural mediation skills teach learners how to understand other people, explain and negotiate different aspects of other cultures.

Teachers and students also should strive to the co-construction of meaning (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9), which is the nature of the mediation mode. This may be achieved, for instance through interaction between students-teachers and students themselves. It ought be borne in mind that this interaction should be no longer an old-fashioned teacher-dictator relation, but teacher-student and/or student-student cooperation. Such cooperation may be developed through projects, group work, collaboration tasks, goal-oriented interactions.

Finally, the application of mediation mode also requires specific communicative behaviours, including students' collaborative work,

unassisted decision-making in order to become autonomous and independent learners, and ultimately competent language users. In this process, teachers should play a role of an 'invisible hand' guiding and supporting their students, controlling at the same time students' autonomous work and the learning process. What is more, allowing students to take some control over their learning process, for instance by choosing the most efficient mediation activity and strategy, may foster the creation of mutual respect and trust between students and a teacher.

Conclusions

Mediation is one of the most natural skills we possess. We play a role of a mediator throughout our lives, for instance in everyday situations when helping parents on holidays abroad, or at work, when explaining details of a briefing to subordinates. Military students and language teachers also use this mode of communication in the classroom. They help others to understand incomprehensible knowledge, facilitate communication and create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. However, it is essential to use mediation effectively. Mediation is a language activity and as 'practice makes perfect' mediators, both teachers and students, should implement it in their learning and teaching process as often as possible and not avoid it, even if it requires introducing some changes in that process. To use the potential of mediation fully, military students should be knowledgeable about various mediation strategies and activities to choose the most effective ones depending on their own potential and the task given.

There are numerous benefits that can be derived from mediation. Mediation fosters the communication process as it considers participants' different attitudes, beliefs, social and cultural contexts, expectations, needs. It builds and develops students' authenticity,

autonomy and critical thinking, essential for learning. At the same time mediation enhances students' engagement and motivation and is universal in terms of life skills. Mediation helps the student to make the most of his/her potential regarding learning. Students who follow the mediation mode are fully responsible for their learning process, as they wield power over the performance and outcomes of communication by choosing the most effective strategy and activity to transfer the intended concept. Thanks to it they become aware of their predominant influence on their learning process, as they are able to control it effectively. Students are the ones who can fulfil their needs and purposes in terms of learning foreign languages. In the long-run, the ability of controlling the learning process bears fruit in self-satisfaction. What is more, mediation, by giving students confidence in their own abilities, positively affects the learning/teaching process.

To conclude, the influence of mediation on the teaching and learning process, and its participants, is indisputable. However, the most important fact is that mediation can be widely used in the educational context, and its benefits are multiple and long-lasting. Military students can smoothly apply mediation strategies and activities to the process of learning different languages and subjects, and thanks to mediation they can develop and acquire key competences for lifelong learning.

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