Language and Linguistics Colloquium

Assessing Language & Analysing Discourse

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EFL LEARNER MEDIATION PERFORMANCE:

Implications of an Empirical Study in a Testing Context

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This presentation:

deals with an unexplored area of applied linguistics, that of cross-language mediation

- discusses the **usefulness** of the research outcomes
- presents its **implications** for (multilingual) testing, curricular planning, syllabus design and teaching

3rd Postgraduate Student Conference
Athens, December 2011

PRESENTATION TITLE: "What mediators are expected to do with the language: analyzing written mediation tasks"

'Mediation' between languages....
.....an unexplored area
Mediating activities and strategies [...]
No illustrative scales are yet available. (CEFR, 2001: 88)
"[The CEFR] provides validated, scientifically calibrated *descriptors* of [the] different aspects of its descriptive scheme, except for intercultural competences and mediation. (North, 2011:6)
What users complain about in relation to the CEFR descriptors are [...]: The absence of descriptors for socio-cultural aspects and reading literature (both tried) and for mediation (not attempted). (North, 2007:657)

RESEARCH AIM

- to acquire an understanding of the mechanisms of **cross-language mediation** in a testing context
- to investigate what **strategies** lead to successful mediation performance

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATION

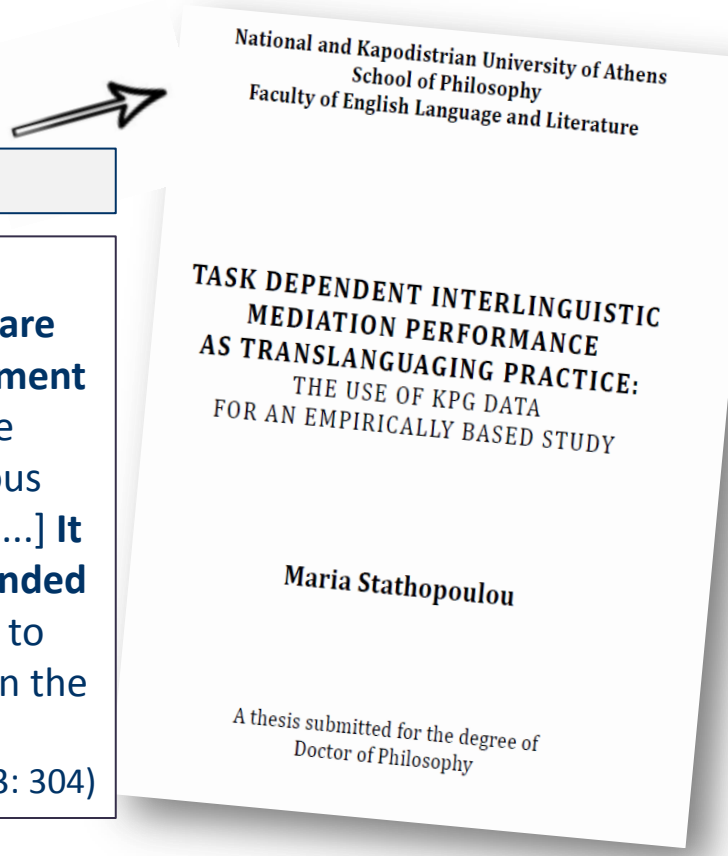
a starting point for the development of **can-do statements relevant to** mediation – already absent from the CEFR

The last words (before the viva)…

Chapter 7

"**Empirically validated descriptors for different levels of language proficiency are definitely in demand in order to supplement the rather vague CEFR descriptors** or the language proficiency descriptors of various language testing systems and curricula. [...] **It is exactly this void that this work is intended to fill**, given the lack of objective criteria to describe mediation skills and strategies in the CEFR."

(Stathopoulou, 2013: 304)


National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
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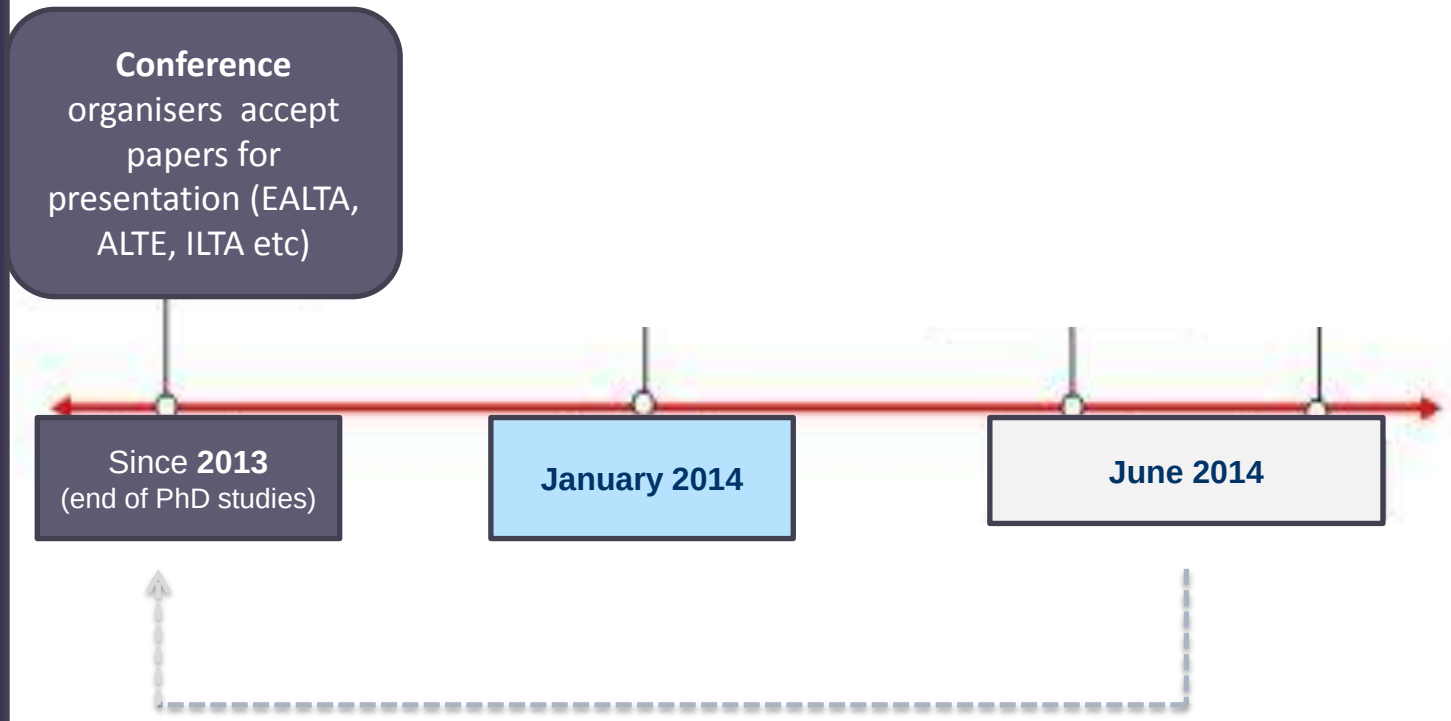
TASK DEPENDENT INTERLINGUISTIC MEDIATION PERFORMANCE AS TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICE:
THE USE OF KPG DATA FOR AN EMPIRICALLY BASED STUDY

Maria Stathopoulou

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

From the last words …to a brave *new* world!



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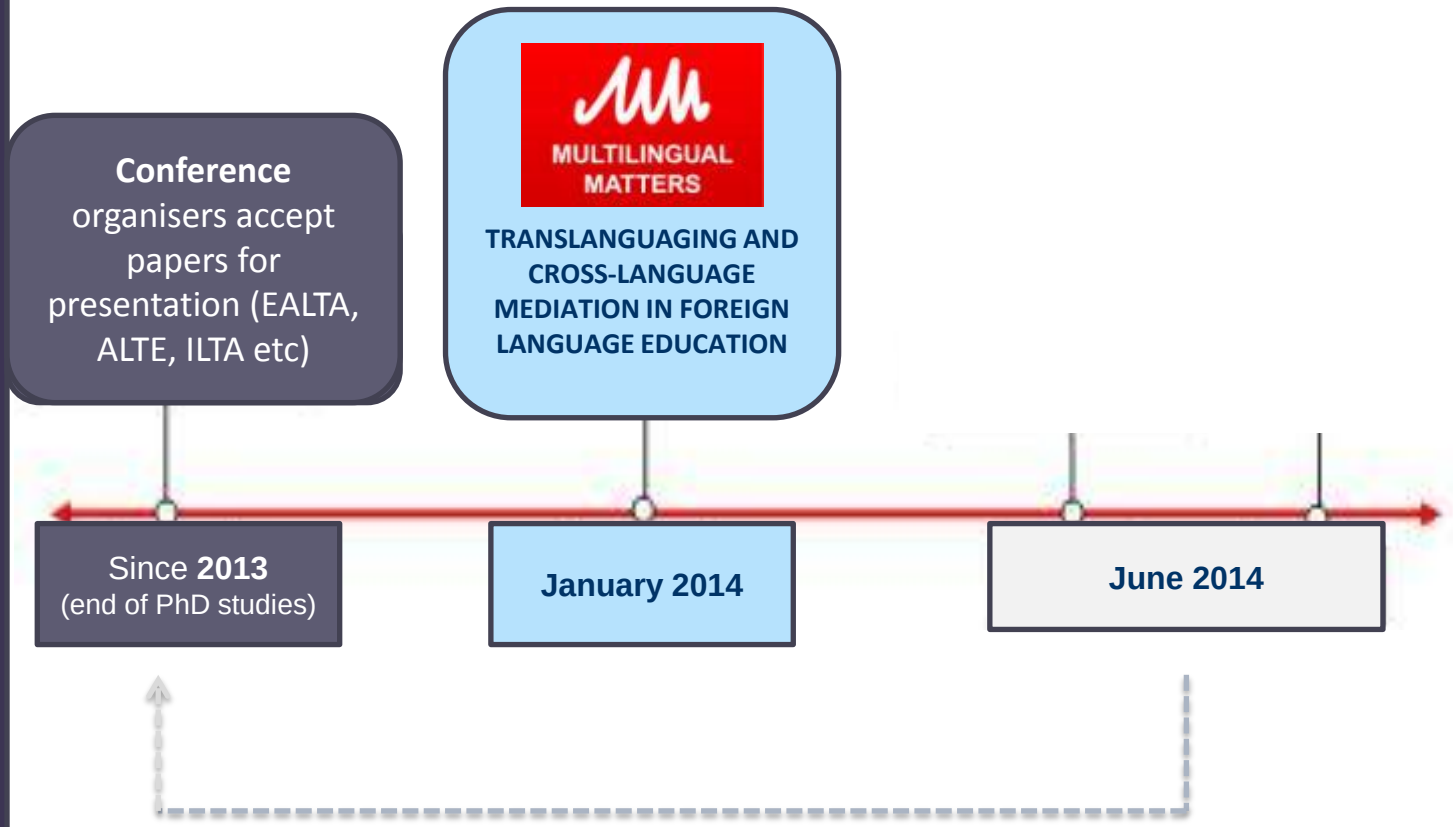

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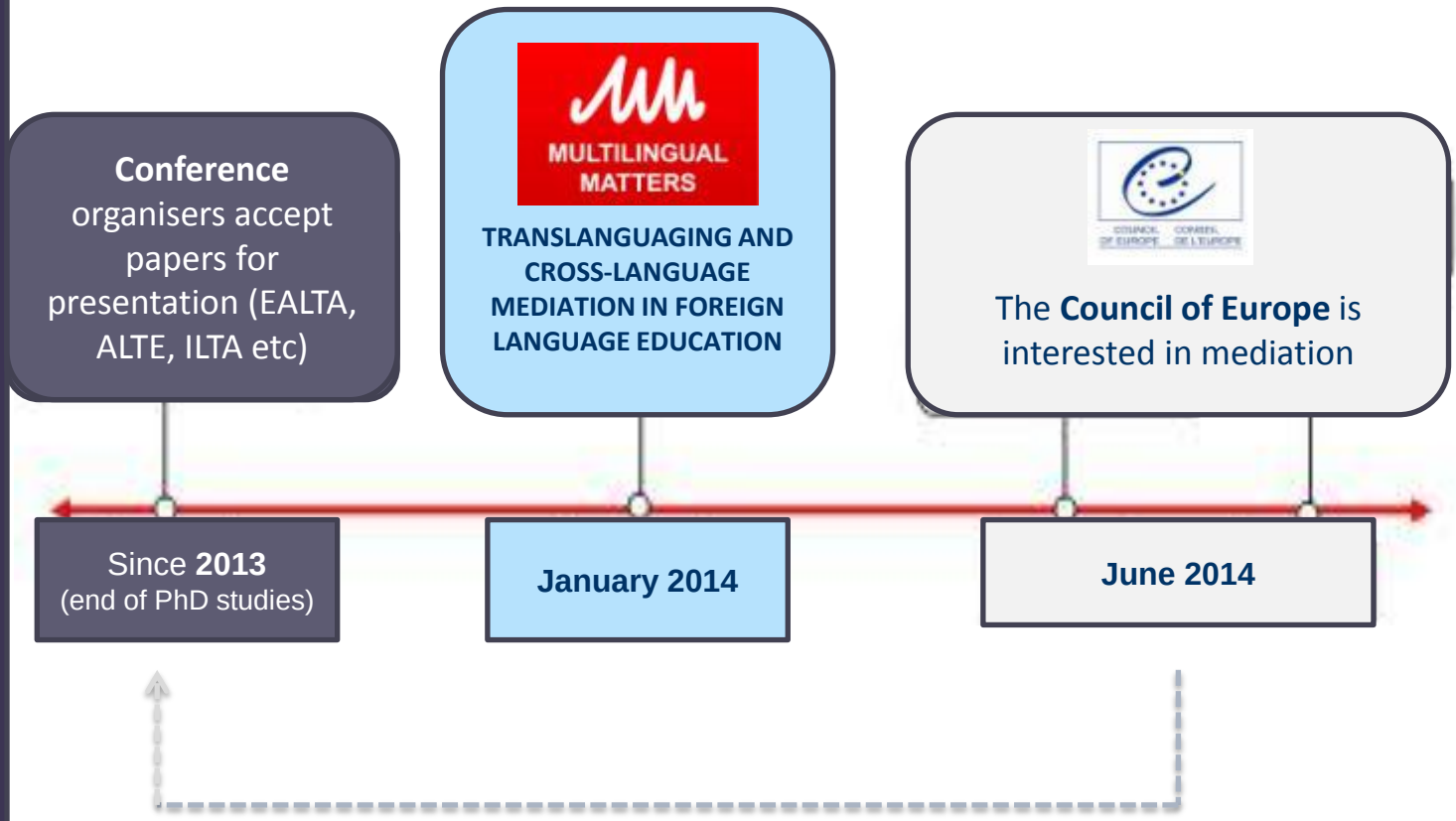


The ‘new’ CEFR...

- Mediation = top priority
- Descriptors for mediation will be included in the new list of CEFR descriptors (2015)

Motivation for the research

Contemporary multilingual contexts:

- Unavoidable mixing/ fusion of languages
- Speakers are continuously called upon to act as interlingual **mediators**

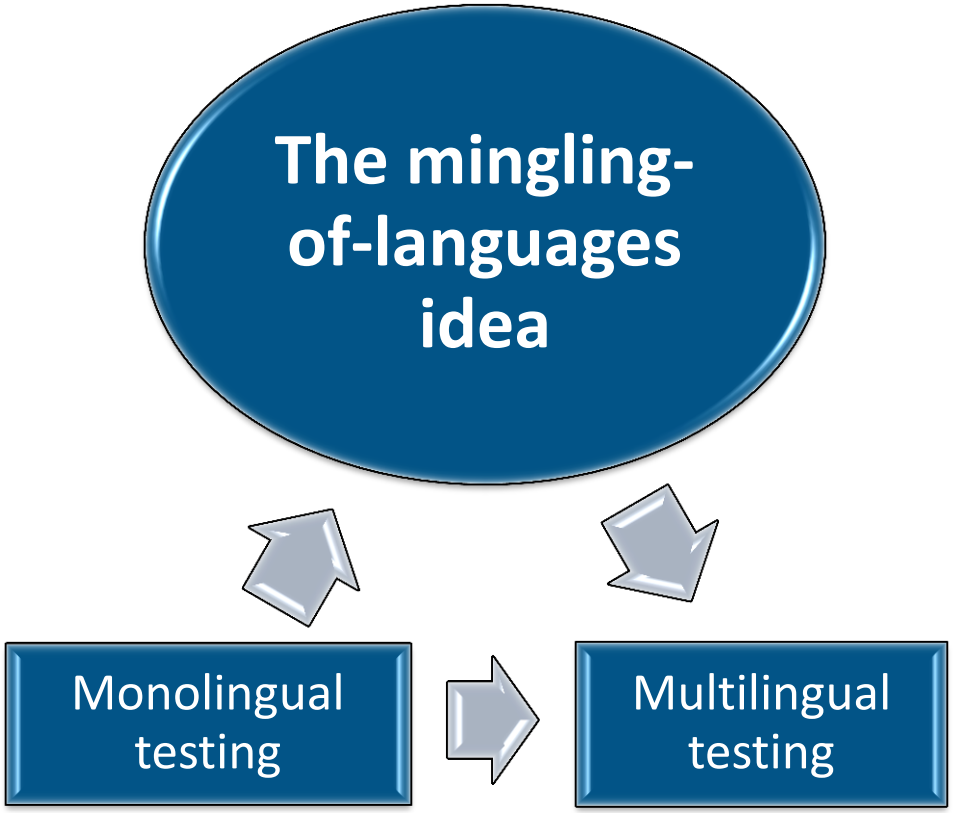
▶ what **skills and strategies** somebody needs to be able to mediate effectively in these contexts?

What does the process of mediation involve?

- **extraction** of **information** from a source text in one language and **relaying** it in another language for a given communicative purpose
- interpretation of meanings articulated in source texts & **making of new meanings** in the target language expressed appropriately for the context of situation (Dendrinos, 2006)

a form of **translanguaging**

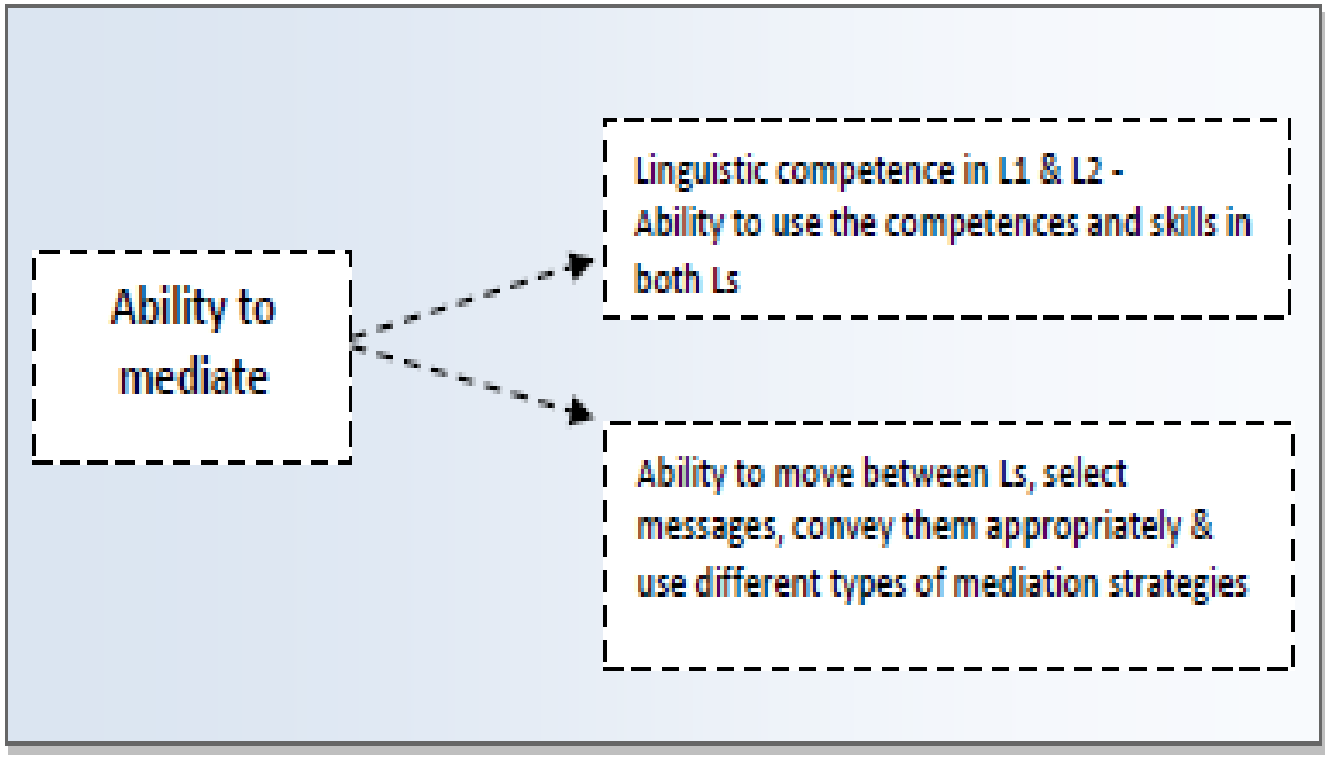
Mediation in the Greek national foreign language exams (KPG): an innovation



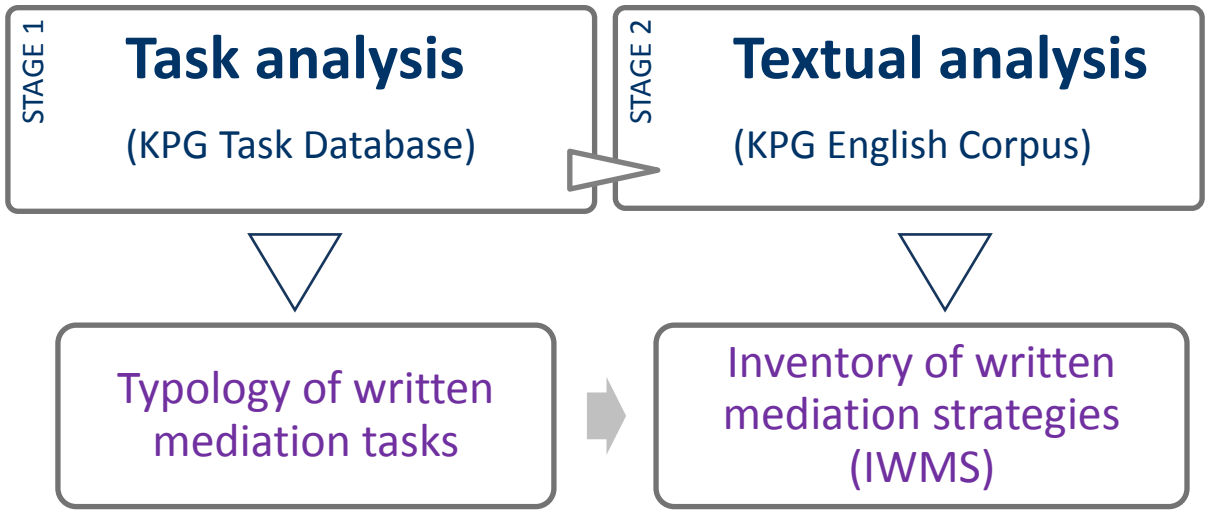
Mediation tasks in the KPG exams: an example

Imagine that you work for the Greek Tourist Organization. Your department has received a request from the tourist organization of another country for information about the very successful 'Blue Flag' programme. You have been asked to write **a report** (180-200 words) **explaining** how Greece has managed to achieve Blue Flag status for many of its beaches. Use information from the website below to write your report.

What does the ability to mediate involve?



Research organisation & outcomes



How do mediation test tasks differ across proficiency levels?

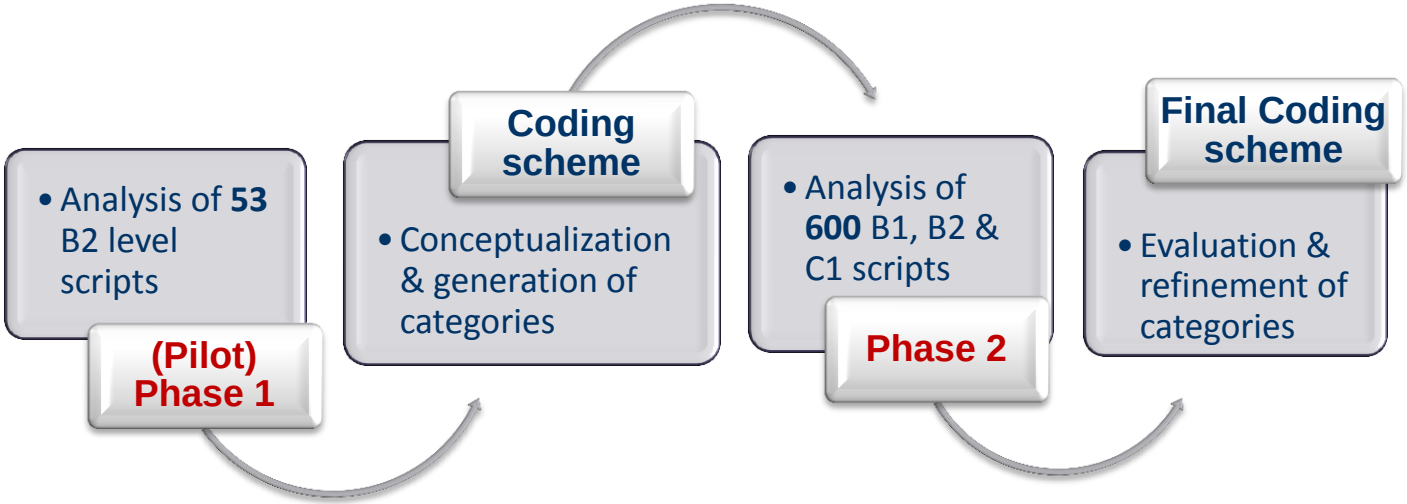
Which mediation strategies lead to successful mediation performance?

The model: what mediation involves

TYPE A MEDIATION STRATEGIES	
1.	**Creative blending between extracted and extra-textual information**
1a	text level (NOT required by the task)
1b	text level (required by the task)
1c	sentence level (NOT required by the task)
1d	sentence level (required by the task)
2.	**Combining information**
2a	text level
2b	sentence level
3.	**Summarising**
3a	Summarising part of the text
3a1	sentence level: sentence extracted transferring the gist
3a2	text level: main ideas
3a3	text level: main ideas + extracted concluding-general statement
3a4	text level: main ideas + inserted concluding-general statement
3a5	text level: sentence inserted transferring the gist & inserted concluding-general statement
3a6	text level: sentence inserted transferring the gist + extracted concluding statement
3a7	text level: topic sentence extracted + main ideas
3a8	text level: topic sentence extracted + main ideas + inserted concluding statement
3a9	text level: topic sentence inserted + main ideas
3a10	text level: topic sentence inserted + main ideas + extracted concluding statement
3a11	text level: topic sentence inserted + main ideas + inserted concluding statement
3b	Summarising the whole text
3b1	sentence level: sentence inserted transferring the gist
3b2	text level: main ideas
3b3	text level: main ideas + extracted concluding statement
3b4	text level: main ideas + inserted concluding statement
3b5	text level: topic sentence extracted + main ideas
3b6	text level: topic sentence extracted + main ideas + extracted concluding statement
3b7	text level: topic sentence extracted + main ideas + inserted concluding statement
3b8	text level: topic sentence inserted + main ideas + inserted concluding statement
3b9	text level: topic sentence inserted + main ideas
4	**Reorganising extracted information**
4a	text level (paragraphs, sentences)
4b	sentence level (clauses, words)

	TYPE B MEDIATION STRATEGIES
5	**Condensing (at sentence level) by combining two (or more) short sentences into one (sentence fusion)**
6	**Expanding**
6a	Breaking one sentence into two (or more) simpler ones
6b	Piece of information followed/preceded transferring the gist
6c	Piece of information followed/preceded transferring the same meaning
7	**Paraphrasing**
7a	Syntax-level paraphrasing (including lexico-syntactic paraphrasing)
7b	Syntax-level paraphrasing (transforming bullets into continuous text)
7c	Phrase-level paraphrasing
7d	Word-level paraphrasing

Towards model development: script analysis



THE CORPUS				
	B1	**B2**	**C1**	No of words
Phase 1		7.950		7.950
Phase 2	9.000	18.000	18.000	45.000
TOTAL NUMBER	9.000	25.950	18.000	**52.950**

Quantitative & qualitative analysis

- To what extent do **task parameters** and requirements affect written mediation-strategy use?
- Which strategies (and to what extent) differentiate **successful** from **less successful** mediation scripts?
- Which strategies (and to what extent) differentiate scripts of different **proficiency levels**?

- To what extent does the **linguistic realisation** of mediation strategies in low level mediation scripts differ from the linguistic realisation of the strategies traced in high level scripts?

CONTRIBUTION & USEFULNESS OF THE STUDY

Implications for curricular planning & syllabus design

Towards the development of descriptors at a European level

- The study constitutes a starting point for the development of **descriptors** and the creation of standardized measures for reliable assessment of mediation competence
  - **mediation strategies** needed for learners of **different levels** when being involved in mediation tasks

Why is it so important to have can-do statements for mediation?

- They will inform the development of language **courses**, test **materials**, **syllabi** and language studies **curricula** aiming at the development of learners' mediation skills and multilingual competence

Towards the development of descriptors:
Usefulness of the study in the Greek context

Certain results have already been creatively exploited for the grading of **illustrative descriptors** relevant to mediation in the new *Greek Curriculum for Foreign Languages,* which among other things, demonstrates **what learners of different levels are expected to do when mediating** (http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/xenesglosses/)

Implications for curricular planning & syllabus design

- This thesis has stressed the importance of the implementation of **programmes** which will include mediation activities as a means for engaging students in languaging practices which involve interplay of languages (**a multilingual approach to language learning**)

Learners will make sense of the **multilingual linguistic landscape** they live in (Gorter, 2006)

▷ **linguistic diversity** will be promoted

▷ **polyphony** will be appreciated

CONTRIBUTION & USEFULNESS OF THE STUDY

Implications for teaching & testing

Implications for teaching

- **Language teachers** who wish to develop their students' mediation strategies can benefit from the outcomes of this research

  Information about:

  a)the types of tasks that can be used when teaching students of different proficiency levels and

  b) what strategies will help students the necessary skills to move with ease from one language to another

Implications for testing

- insights to the KPG test development teams and generally test developers who wish **to assess mediation ability**

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