# Re-conceptualizing Mediation

A special issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies*

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This special issue invites new perspectives on the phenomenon of mediation in translation and interpreting contexts. Mediation is understood as an overarching concept referring to 1) the ability of the translator/interpreter to make sense for themselves, for example, by making discursive decisions on what and how to mediate in relation to a given a source text, be it written or spoken (Pöchhacker, 2008; Liddicoat, 2016); 2); the ability of the translator/interpreter to make sense for others (through, for example, offering additional information or departing from literal renditions); and 3) the interpreter's assumption of the role of advocate for one of the parties in the interpreted encounter (e.g., for a client who does not speak the societal language), and therefore providing legal or medical help and advice.

We welcome both theoretical and empirical studies exploring the conceptualization and/or re-conceptualization of mediation as they relate to the translation and interpreting phenomena. Accordingly, the aims of this special issue are:
- To present an overview of the latest developments related to the concept of 'mediation' and its professional and ethical implications in translation and interpreting contexts.
- To further investigate the kinds of mediation taking place in the translation and interpreting industry and relevant service sectors.
- To relate translator/interpreter agency to the concept of mediation.
- To determine to what extent (if at all) translation and interpreting training addresses issues of mediation.

The concept of mediation has become increasingly contentious, as positivist notions related to 'faithfulness', which assume the existence of a 'true meaning' that can (and should) be transferred across languages and cultures, are being challenged on the basis of both empirical evidence and theoretical developments. In translation and interpreting literature, we often find terms such as 'mediators' (e.g., Katan, 2004; Archibald & Garzone, 2014; Liddicoat, 2016; Wang, 2017), 'mediation' (e.g., Pöchhacker, 2008), or 'translator-mediated' and/or 'interpreter-mediated' communication (e.g., Baker 2006; Tipton 2017, 2021a). A close examination of the sources shows that these terms are used by different authors to refer to different phenomena. For example, Archibald and Garzone (2014) use the term to refer to linguistic mediation aiming to 'overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning' for the sake of equivalence, a notoriously elusive and contested concept. Literature on this type of mediation abounds, especially in Translation Studies, e.g., Grave (2016). In Interpreting Studies, mediation is often discussed in relation to interpreters' roles (Angelelli, 2008) and interpreters' efforts to resolve (potential) conflicts resulting from the contents of communication (Wang, 2017).

Mediation with the aim of resolving conflicts is also referred to as contractual mediation (Pöchhacker, 2008), and, at least in Europe, such work is often carried out by people with the job title 'cultural mediator', who in general have no training in interpreting but interpret, and who are instructed to work as advocates for clients who do not speak the societal language. Although scholars such as Martín and Phelan (2009) recommend that cultural mediation be carried out not

by interpreters but by professional mediators, the results of empirical studies, such as Kohler (2016) and Pokorn and Južnič (2020), indicate that interpreters also respond to the cultural realities of the audience while interpreting. This naturally raises questions regarding (sometimes mismatched) expectations and ethics, the latter issue examined in depth in Phelan et al. (2020).

Another issue that merits attention is what happens when translators and interpreters are confronted with situations where mediation is required to avoid conflict. If translators'/interpreters' interventions are favored or needed, are there guidelines on how to implement them? To date, there is little literature on such topics, although they have occasionally been touched upon in interpreting literature (e.g,, Rodríguez Vicente, Napier, and de Pedro Ricoy (2021) and Tipton (2021b)).

An emerging development in the study of mediation involves the impact, as in Saito (2016), where the influence of translators' mediation in the target language was observed. Studies by Gavioli and Baraldi (2007) and Davitti (2013), on the other hand, assessed the impact of the omission or exaggeration of some forms of expression in interpreting in communicative exchanges between service providers and service users. Other possible research areas regarding mediation involve translators'/interpreters' selective processes when conducting mediation, role space in sign language interpreting, and the evolution of mediation in light of technological advances and the means available to conduct mediation.

To date, there has been limited research on how translation/interpreting programs and pedagogy are addressing the issue of mediation. This raises the question of whether translator/interpreter training is still mainly focused on equivalence. While, according to codes of practice, accuracy and impartiality are expected of translators and interpreters, mediation has been documented in both translation and interpreting. It is therefore necessary to investigate how translator and interpreter training courses are responding to issues related to mediation (e.g., Napier 2021 and Zhou 2022).

Abstracts are welcome that address mediation related to translation and interpreting in any sector, including, but not limited to, commercial/business, literary, health, scientific/technical, political/diplomatic, and public service. Abstracts are also welcome that explore the relationship between mediation and technology, mediation in signed interpreting, and mediation in translation and interpreting pedagogy or course design. Proposed contributions should aim to explore the current status and expectations regarding mediation, and may address any of the following themes (other related themes will be also considered):

- Mediation as observed in translation or interpreting processes, products or services of all modes, in both private sectors and public service settings
- Mediation in crisis or conflict situations, including conflict resolution (e.g., during the Covid-19 pandemic, in war zones, or as part of legal disputes)
- Translators' or interpreters' voluntary or proactive mediation, including their views or expectations regarding mediation, as well as contractual mediation
- The impact of translators' and interpreters' mediation
- The effect of the use of translation/interpreting technologies in mediation
- The ethics of mediation in translation and interpreting
- Current approaches to translator and/or interpreter training regarding mediation

**Timeline**

Call for papers: June 2022
Abstract deadline: 31 July 2022
Abstract decisions: 15 September 2022
Manuscript deadline: 31 January 2023
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**Submission Instructions**

All abstracts should be emailed to both guest editors Caiwen Wang <c.wang4@westminster.ac.uk> and Raquel de Pedro Ricoy <raquel.depedroricoy@stir.ac.uk>. Abstracts should be between 300-500 words, exclusive of references. Please be sure to include the names and affiliations of all of the authors on the paper as part of the submission.

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