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### **Biography**

Paola Brusasco is Senior Researcher at the University of Chieti-Pescara and held several courses in English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Torino. Her research interests include Translation Studies, Critical Discourse Analysis, ELT, and Postcolonial Studies. She has translated many literary works, both contemporary and classic, and is the author of the monographs *Approaching Translation: Theoretical and Practical Issues* and *Writing Within/Without/About Sri Lanka: Discourses of Cartography, History and Translation in Selected Works* by Michael Ondaatje and Carl Muller. Her current work focuses on the teaching of translation skills and language contact.

### **Presentation:**

**Mediation as an extra skill in non-specialist language courses: a case study with Psychology students.**

### **Abstract:**

Every university programme in Italy includes at least one exam in English through which students prove their competence in the language. Outside of Modern Languages programmes, English courses often aim at developing academic reading skills and widening the knowledge of the fundamental lexicon pertaining to the major area of study; sometimes, instead, they may focus on consolidating the students' competence in general English. However, because of the knowledge acquired in their fields of election, prospective graduates could be in an excellent position to act – if need be – as interlingual mediators by learning targeted strategies. Without challenging the role of language specialists such as translators, interpreters or mediators proper, the English course might then include some mediation abilities which – in situations where content prevails, and supported by sectorial knowledge – are likely to make up for imperfect language competence and still lead to effective communication. This paper is based on an experience teaching an English course to two groups of Psychology students. Envisaging the students as potential mediators in situations where English may be the lingua franca, for example with migrants, and assuming their empathy and emotional intelligence, a few aspects have been selected from the CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors (2018), i.e.: processing a text, relaying specific information, and facilitating communication.

Both groups have worked on the same texts. After three lessons focussing on comprehension activities, lexical enrichment and grammar revision, one group has continued to work at the level of language, while the other has begun to integrate mediation strategies. For example, a rather long and detailed text has been condensed into an infographic to be illustrated orally. Viceversa, extremely concise instructions have been made more accessible through synonymy and simplified syntax. While pair- and groupwork activities have been assigned to both groups, the need to foreground interaction and constructivism has made them prevalent with the second group. Besides believing in the value of mediation abilities to be used both in the students' future professional lives and in society at large, my hypothesis – to be verified with a final test – is that mediation-oriented activities help the language learning process and improve the students' performance in traditional reading comprehension activities.