

PRELIM 3

Lithuania: LAKMA

(Lithuanian Association of
Teachers of English as a
Foreign Language)

with

**Bell Educational Services
Ltd**

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner	Lithuanian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign language (LAKMA)
	UKI partner	Bell Educational Services Ltd
User profile	Context overview	Lithuanian Upper Secondary
	Learner age group(s)	Grade 11 (age 17-18)
	Curriculum overview	Recently updated to include mediation. National exams do not (yet) include assessing mediation
Mode of delivery	Resource format and organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students: editable Microsoft (MS) Word handouts and worksheets, PDF versions. • Teachers: PowerPoint slides, and teacher's notes including brief lesson outline, and detailed procedure <p>Materials hosted, disseminated and added to on LAKMA's Moodle platform, used to monitor and evaluate their use and development</p>
	Resource content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom ready teaching resources for teaching mediation • Tutorials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an introduction to mediation (video) ○ adapting course books to teach mediation (video and/or teachers notes) ○ assessing mediation (video &/or teachers notes)
	Resource sustainability	Iterative process of teachers participating in workshops and webinars, designing resources and adding them to the resource bank on Moodle.
Course content	Methods	Initially via shared Google drive; later via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • print versions • USB sticks • Moodle platform on LAKMA website
	Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov 2023-Feb 2024 Focus group (10 teachers) fortnightly teach lessons and give feedback via Zoom calls • Feb-Mar 2024 Dissemination Group (21 teachers) trial resources and give feedback • Apr 2024 LAKMA Annual Assembly report on PRELIM 3 and mediation materials • Autumn 2024 LAKMA government funded regional seminars on teaching mediation

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec 2024 Resources made available to teachers
	Number of teachers reached	<p>Phase 1: 21 teachers in Dissemination group;</p> <p>Phase 2: potentially 300 LAKMA members via seminars and finally</p> <p>Phase 3: available to all English Language teachers in Lithuania (2823 English Language teachers in 2021, but these resources only relevant to teachers teaching B1-B2 (grades 9-11 and there are no stats available for these)</p>

Description of the partners

LAKMA has an active membership of around 300 primary and secondary English teachers. It runs regular professional development (PD) events for its members, predominantly online, to reach across the whole country.

Bell is a language education and teacher training provider based in Cambridge. Bell's Education Programmes department (through whom this project was delivered) also provides educational consultancy services and works with partners around the world to offer teacher training and English language tuition.

Key features of the context

The Lithuanian context:

- qualified experienced, knowledgeable teachers, with C1-C2 levels of English, with project participants a ratio of 60:40 C1:C2
- students, a little differentiated in terms of level but broadly homogeneous B2
- smallish class sizes, with those participating in the project between 12-16 students, some schools stream classes, others do not, it depends on location and staffing levels
- course book led and for some exam driven courses and lessons
- well-resourced in terms of materials and technology: platforms, devices, access to internet, access to educationally protected and restricted WIFI
- easily movable classroom furniture to facilitate group work.

Outline of the teacher resource package and Description of the resource package

The decision, taken in January 2023, was to create a resource package of materials for mediation in response to proposed changes in the updated curriculum, with mediation to be assessed in the national exams. It hasn't thus far been included in the assessment but is in the new curriculum and thus should know how to teach it.

The resource package includes materials for *mediating text activities*, at B2 level for Lithuanian teachers teaching grade 11 (age 17-18). Specifically, it comprises:

- Classroom ready materials:
 - organised into six units of 4-5 lessons per unit, each lesson of either 45 or 90 minutes, corresponding to six of the seven mediating text activities described in page 104 of the CEFR Companion Volume (2018): mediating a text by relaying specific information, explaining data, processing a text or texts (summarising), translating a written text in speech and in writing, note-taking, and responding to creative texts (including literature)
 - lesson material with student worksheets and handouts in editable Word documents and PDFs; PowerPoint slides for teacher presentation; and detailed teacher's notes
- Teachers' Tutorials:

Four short supplementary ten-minute tutorials (video, and written text documents) for teacher reference:

 - Introducing mediation
 - Adapting course books to teach mediation
 - Using authentic materials to teach mediation
 - Assessing mediation

The resource package was initially stored within and available via a shared Google drive and is to be hosted and continually added to via a Moodle course on the LAKMA website.

Design principles underpinning the classroom materials

- Mediation
 - The resources are designed to help teachers understand and teach *mediating text activity types*.
- Supplementary published materials currently available are limited and work within a language skills lesson paradigm, and teach mediation as another language skill
 - Mediation in these materials is taught as a *mode of communication*, not as a *language skill*. Thus, the mediating text activities are interactive and the focus is on bridging a gap. The gap can be linguistic, cultural, information, or knowledge.

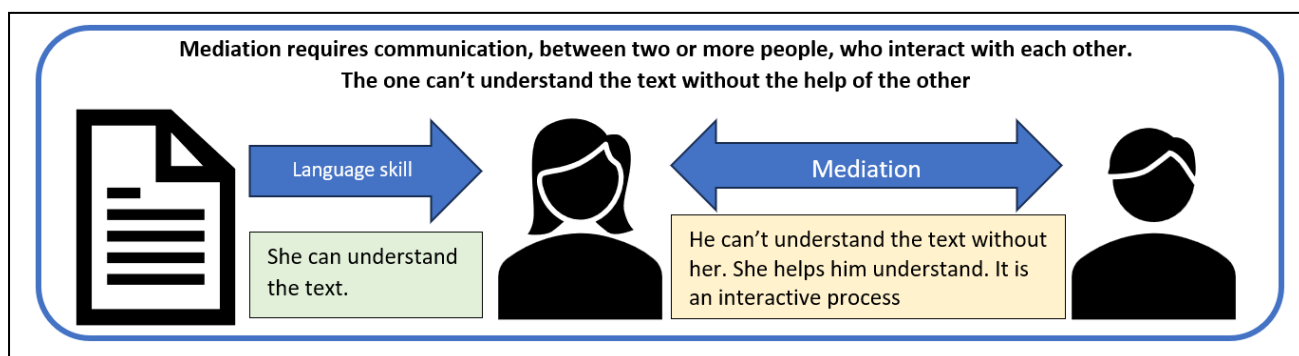


Figure 1: Diagram showing the meaning of mediation

In the diagram she can, for example, demonstrate her understanding of a text by summarising it. Here summarising is a language skill, and the focus is on her ability to produce a summary. It becomes mediation when she helps him to understand the text by summarising it for him. Here the focus is on her bridging the gap in his understanding.

- Lessons to have TBL format and a strong form of CLT.
- Source materials to be taken from:
 - course books in use in Lithuania and adapted to teach mediation
 - other ELT sources such as BBC English (especially for video materials)
 - authentic on-line materials (text, audio and video) to ensure variety, topicality, and coverage of the six mediating text activity types.
- Student page layout was initially to be a lesson to a page or double page, but, following feedback became 4-5 pages providing more precise instructions and more space for students to write.
- Students should know what they are learning and why they are doing something through the use of can-do statements.
- Use of technology enables students to:
 - access the internet to search for information and to use authentic materials
 - listen and view individually, rather than whole class
 - record themselves doing the tasks, for playback, transcription and analysis, in contrast to the conventional post-task whole class feedback and error correction.
- Materials to be piloted, feedback given and tailored to fit the Lithuanian context.
- A 3-stage professional development (PD) model for dissemination and development adopted:
 - to ensure resources are introduced and disseminated in a measured way, as opposed to simply being made available
 - to help teachers understand and implement mediation, as part of their repertoire
 - to keep the resource bank active and further populate it for all teachers.

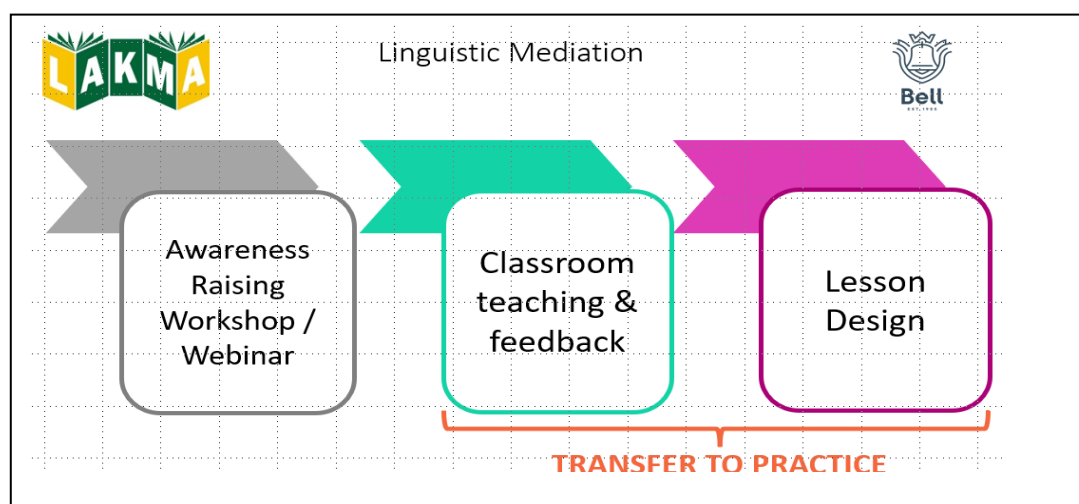


Figure 2: The professional development model

Stage 1: Participants attend workshops or participate in webinars designed to raise awareness of mediation.

Stage 2: In-school follow-up: participants teach, evaluate and feedback on specific lessons.

Stage 3: Lesson design: participants adapt course book materials or design their own lessons for inclusion in the resources bank.

Project findings

Working in partnership

Stand out features and practices:

- much greater active involvement in realising this project than was the case in PRELIM 2, and much more a collaborative partnership between the UKI and the ETA to produce the resources and materials
- working together on Zoom calls to develop our understanding of mediation and materials and activities that work and don't in a Lithuanian context
- the effort, commitment and willingness of the teachers involved to participate throughout, to go the extra mile and to provide ideas, suggestions and materials
- the strengthened relationships and networks between teachers in different regions in Lithuania thanks to collaboration with Bell.

Learning points

- things take the time they need. Trying to make up time following the long delay in production by being very task focussed didn't work well. It took time to establish a good working relationship so that we could develop the resources together
- online meetings are more effective than trying to communicate via email
- the materials design was a fascinating exercise in mediation – bridging the inevitable gap between the lessons the materials writers create and the actual lesson a teacher teaches from their perspective and adapt it to their context with their specific class. And between us we bridged the gap extremely well in some respects and not in others
- mediation as a language skill can be relatively easily assessed but mediation as a mode of communication is difficult to assess because it has to include the mediator and their interlocutor.

Learnings from designing the teacher support resources

We learned more about:

- mediation, especially the distinction between mediation as a language skill and mediation as a mode of communication: that it is action-oriented and that there needs to be a genuine gap

- adapting course books, and that it's relatively straightforward to adapt skills development lessons in course books to teach mediation. Because they tend to follow a weak CLT lesson paradigm, it's relatively easy to tweak that and create a strong CLT version using the same materials. To what extent teachers will buy into it, given that it requires more of them to adapt the material, is an open question
- producing materials for others, especially that it takes much longer than you'd expect. Producing the first draft could take two full days, and then there is the piloting, reviewing, and editing, and writing clear and explicit procedures for others to follow
- the value of involving both experienced and early career teachers in lesson design, piloting and giving feedback. Perhaps this is obvious in hindsight, but we started out enlisting only experienced teachers and trainers.

Disseminating the teacher support resources

There were two initiatives in play here: the PRELIM3 programme, with its March deadline and the National CPD initiative, with its autumn deadline. The decision taken to hold back the national distribution until the autumn was a strategic one, aligned with the PRELIM principle of decentering ELT projects.

As to what we can do to avoid the materials languishing untouched on teachers' shelves, on LAKMA's website, etc. is not to simply to 'make them available' but to roll them out in a scaffolded way, and to have teachers follow the PD model described above

The first three cohorts (focus group, dissemination group, and regional seminar participants) went through or will go through all three stages listed on page 4.

The wider LAKMA and ELT community will have access to the teachers' tutorials as well as to the materials and what will be asked of them and how they'll be encouraged to use the resources is one of the activities of the LAKMA Board's action plan for the coming school year. They have previous experience of online resources 'gathering dust and fading into oblivion' and are keen for this not to happen with the mediation resource package – exactly how, perhaps by requiring that they follow the Moodle course, before being given open access to the resources and lessons, to be agreed in the planning for the autumn seminars.

Monitoring and evaluating resource use: data gathering and its impact

Dates	Group	Participants	Data collection
Nov-Feb	Focus group	10	Quantitative and qualitative written feedback from teachers and their students on the lessons
Feb-Mar	Dissemination group	21 teachers 175 students	
Sep-Oct	Regional Seminars	LAKMA members	
Dec	Wider LAKMA & ELT community	Moodle course	Via website and Moodle analytics

Figure 3: data collection diagram

Focus Group

The objectives of having this group were for them to:

- pilot the materials and lessons being produce
- give feedback
- ensure that the materials fit the Lithuanian context.

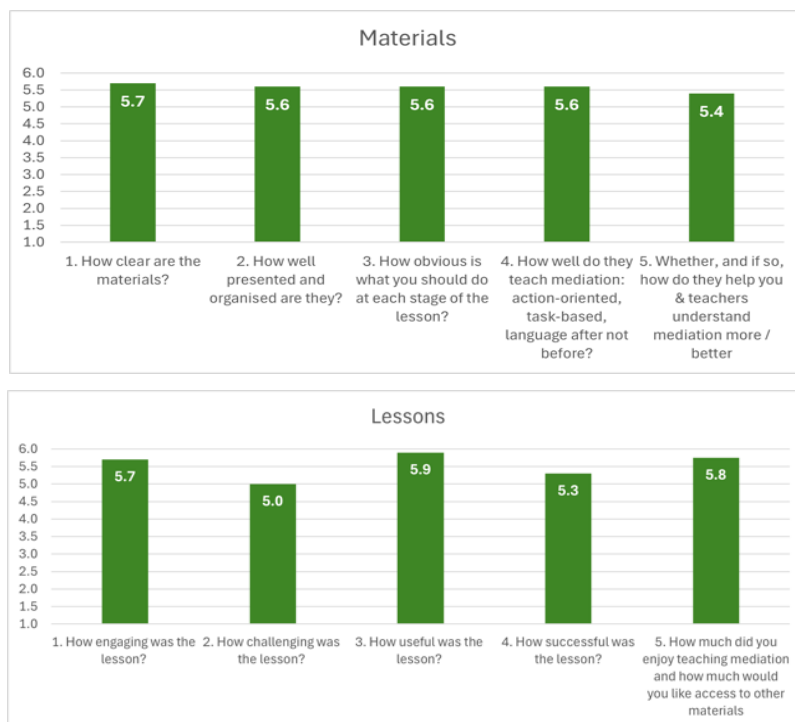
The group rejected the use of questionnaires and written feedback in favour of Zoom calls where they could discuss the lessons in detail, and as a result had significant impact on the materials design, e.g. their input led to:

- switching the organising principle midway through the project from course book adaptation to mediating text activity types
- revising the materials to teach mediation as a mode of communication rather than a language skill
- expanding the student pages from a single lesson to a page to 4-5 pages a lesson to enable students to write and to give more precise instruction, direction and support; and provide for student neurodiversity
- adding an at-a-glance overview to the detailed step by step teachers notes; and
- adjusting the overly optimistic lesson timings to reflect reality.

Dissemination Group

The purpose of the dissemination group was to:

- validate the materials



○ Figure 3: Feedback score examples

- determine whether teachers and students liked them and whether they worked in the Lithuanian context

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- feed into preparations for the autumn regional seminars.

Their feedback, as the Likert scales and positive comments show, did validate the materials. Their reactions were very positive, especially on how engaging, challenging and useful they found the lessons, and on how much they enjoyed the lessons and wanted more. There were detractors, less than 5%, of students and teachers, who felt that the lessons were fun, but they didn't learn anything (i.e. new language) and preferred not to work in groups, and there was possibly also an element of students pleasing their teacher and teachers pleasing the materials writers, in their scores, but their comments clearly supported the high scores.

Although, as expected, mediation was unfamiliar to them, but the activity types were not, there were specific aspects which were unfamiliar or new to do with methodology or technology. For example:

- highly interactive action-oriented lessons, with grouping and re-grouping activities, jigsaw tasks and other information gap activities which some found 'intense' and stressful to manage (they are more used to a single culminating fluency activity to end a lesson)
- logistically challenging uses of technology to:
 - enable students: to access the internet for different purposes (in contrast to the whole class doing the same thing at the same time)
 - use earphones to listen individually, (in contrast to whole class)
 - record themselves doing the tasks, for playback, reflection, transcription and analysis (in contrast to the conventional post-task whole class teacher feedback and error correction).

This lack of familiarity led to some teachers feeling stressed by the class and time management, and others preferring to skip using the tech for students to listen individually and/or record their conversations because they were too difficult to organise, potentially too noisy, and/or too time consuming, and possibly because they were unconvinced of its value.

Preparations for the regional seminars can take this into account by e.g. including workshops: demonstrating class and time management of different grouping and cross-grouping activity types; and others encouraging student reflection, self and peer evaluation, feedback and action planning, or others on the use of tech to readily and easily produce transcriptions of conversations for analysis.

Project outcomes

For operational/logistical reasons, data relating to the use made of the materials in the Moodle course won't be available in time for the report writing deadlines, in terms of both monitoring and evaluation and outcomes.