



RELANG

Relating language examinations to the common European reference levels of language proficiency: *promoting quality assurance in education and facilitating mobility*

Exploring ways to assess Mediation

Training event on mediation in the Official Schools of Languages
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European Centre for Modern Languages and European Commission cooperation on
Innovative Methodologies and Assessment In Language Learning



PART 1

Concepts of Mediation

Mediation in the CEFR

“In mediating activities, the language user is not concerned to express his/her own meanings, but simply to act as an intermediary between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly, normally (but not exclusively) speakers of different languages. ...”

(CEFR, p.87)

“Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.”

(CEFR, p.14)

Mediation in the Royal Decree

Level B1, 5. Mediation activities, 5.1 Objectives

- Orally transmit to third parties
- Interpret in everyday situations during brief and simple exchanges with friends, family, guests or hosts
- Interpret during simple, usual and well-structured exchanges, of a purely factual nature (...)
- Mediate in everyday and less common situations (e.g. medical visit, simple administrative procedures, or a domestic problem (...))
- Take brief notes for third parties (...)
- Summarize brief pieces of information from various sources (...)
- Transmit in writing the general idea, the main points, and relevant details of brief fragments of information (...)

Types of Mediation

- **Linguistic mediation/textual mediation** > interlinguistic and intralinguistic
- **Cultural mediation** > facilitating understanding; cultural awareness (within a language and across languages and cultures)
- **Social mediation** > playing the role of intermediary (linguistic and cultural mediator); critical cultural awareness
- **Pedagogic mediation** > educators mediating knowledge, concepts and thinking (cognitively and relationally)

Mediating a text

- Relaying specific information in speech and in writing
- Explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts etc.) in speech and writing
- Processing text in speech and writing
- Translating a written text in speech and writing
- Note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.)
- Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)
- Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)

CEFR Mediation Descriptor Scales (2)

Mediating communication

- Facilitating pluricultural space
- Acting as intermediary in informal situations
- Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements

Mediating concepts

- Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
- Collaborating to construct meaning
- Managing interaction
- Encouraging conceptual talk

Assessment and Mediation

Standardized Assessment

- Independence of observations
- Unidimensionality
- Use of psychometric analysis

Formative Assessment

- Interdependence of observations
- Multidimensionality of the learning process
- Use of behavioural observation tools

Mediation

- Interdependence of observations (social activity)
- Multidimensionality
- Difficulties for standardized assessments because of the multidimensional nature of mediation (linguistic, cultural, social, educational)

Conclusions

- The focus in mediation scales is not as much on language skills as on role of language in mediation
- What refers to language skills in the mediation scales is not quite new and has already been captured by descriptors for Reception and Production
- Mediation is already being used in many existing testing contexts, but mediation is then usually given less importance because in a language test the focus is on language and not on a test taker's cognitive, social and other skills.

Part 2

The Pragmatics of Assessing Mediation

(based on the questionnaire sent to participants)

What is mediation?

- ❑ Distinction between Mediation and:
 - Translation
 - Production
 - Interaction

- ❑ Contextualizing tasks to go beyond reading and listening tasks

Types of Mediation

- ❑ **Intra**linguistic and/or **Inter**linguistic Mediation?
 - ❑ Pros and Cons
- ❑ Design and format
 - ❑ oral/written input (rubrics/tasks)
 - ❑ oral/written production
- ❑ Contextualization of tasks

What must be assessed?

- Drawing lines between mediation / translation / written production
- Linguistic and cultural mediation assessment? Only linguistic?
- How to separate mediation competence from student's oral or written production and oral or written understanding?
- Assessment of mediation and linguistic performance? Only mediation? Only when language production interferes with mediation task?
- Assessment based (exclusively) on mediation subskills? Should it assess aspects such as vocabulary scope, grammar?
- Ideal length of mediation assessment tasks (input and time associated to levels)

CEFR Alignment and Validation of Mediation Tests

Stages in linking tests to the CEFR

- Familiarisation
- Specification
- Standardization
- Standard setting
- Validation

Assessment Scales

- Using CEFR mediation descriptors in scales.
- Basic criteria for designing written and oral mediation scales.
- Analytical scales or holistic scales? Both?
- Different scales for each task?
- How to assess mediation when input / prompts / tasks fail? How to avoid it?
- Should use of language be included?

Other Suggestions

- Creation of samples and model tests and assessment procedures
- Item design during the training.
- Analysis of results and conclusions extracted from official mediation tests and assessment in other countries