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Activities for Mediation

Building bridges in the ELT classroom

Riccardo Chiappini and Ethan Mansur

DELTA Publishing

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Preface

The DELTA Publishing Ideas in Action series aims to help teachers to relate specific areas of theory and research to their classroom practice. It aims to bridge the divide between these through explanation of the theory from a practitioner perspective, discussion of major research findings and linking both of these to example activities, strategies and suggestions for the classroom. Written by practising teachers and experienced materials writers, Ideas in Action titles show that theory and practice can come together to make English language learning both effective and enjoyable for all.

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Mediation has recently become a new "buzzword" in language teaching circles, particularly in Europe, due to the recent development of "can do" descriptors for mediation activities in the Council of Europe's updated CEFR (2020). This has established mediation as a key concept in language use, and therefore, also in language learning. This resource book is one of the first to respond to this innovation, offering numerous activities to enable learners to practise mediation skills across all three subcategories of mediating texts, mediating concepts and mediating communication. Not only that, the authors also provide a range of supplementary resources to enable teachers who are new to this way of looking at language use to understand what it is, why it's important and – of greatest value to us as teachers – how to develop learners' proficiency in mediation skills.

While many of us will notice overlaps between the different task and activity types provided in this book and other ways of categorising language use, the fascinating thing about the recent focus on mediation is that it recognises the close relationship between *language use* and *language form*, by which I mean not only form at morphological and syntactical levels, but also aspects of discourse structure, genre and, perhaps most importantly, differences in form between languages – areas largely neglected in teaching materials to date. The recent multilingual turn in education (May, 2013) has brought to the fore the need to focus on both *intralinguistic* and *cross-linguistic* practices (see the authors' Introduction for clarification of these terms); the related concept of "translanguaging" raises our awareness not only of how different languages can be used together flexibly in appropriate contexts (see Anderson, 2018), but also of how even those who were traditionally thought of as "monolinguals" are in fact also capable of translanguaging – in how they use genre types, social norms and even dialects and registers appropriately, all of which involves aspects of mediation.

I am very much impressed by the authors' ability not only to clarify some of the trickier concepts within the mediation literature, but also to provide numerous examples of mediation tasks and activities to ensure that teachers and learners get to grips with it. Not only do the activities included provide the usual photocopiable materials, clear procedure and suggestions for variation typical of the Ideas in Action series, but they also offer concrete suggestions for providing feedback to learners on their performance in tasks, ideas for differentiation, and even suggestions for virtual classrooms – particularly relevant in the "post-Covid" era. Some of my personal favourites are unit **2.1b Debunked**, which offers vital critical literacy skills for the current social media era, and the cross-linguistic skills practised in units such as **2.4d What's on the menu?**. Those of us who work cross-culturally regularly experience the need to understand a menu in a foreign language, yet such skills are rarely, if ever, practised in current global textbooks, which remain predominantly intralingual in their activity orientation.

I sincerely hope you enjoy using **Activities for Mediation**, the fifth addition to the Ideas in Action series, as much as I am sure I will.

Jason Anderson
Series Editor: Ideas in Action

Activities for Mediation – Contents

0 Introduction

Introduction to mediation

When you hear the word "mediation," what probably comes to mind is the resolution of commercial, international and personal disputes. However, this term has recently become a buzzword in the world of ELT with the release of the *Companion Volume* to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (CEFRCV). In this document, mediation is defined in the following way:

> "In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes across modalities (e.g. from spoken to signed or vice versa, in cross-modal communication) and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)."
>
> Council of Europe (2020, p.90)

Despite the recent interest in mediation, it still doesn't appear by name in most coursebooks and many teachers may be unfamiliar with the concept. The aim of this book is to fill that gap by familiarising teachers with mediation and providing them with a wide variety of mediation tasks for them to use in their classrooms, whether they are teaching in secondary schools, universities or private language schools. We will also provide practical tips on how to teach and assess mediation.

1 A brief history of mediation

Mediation was introduced into mainstream language teaching and learning when it was included in the first version of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Before this, the term "mediation" was already in use in the field of education, most notably in the works of L. S. Vygotsky, 1978, and later on by the proponents of sociocultural theories of learning (Lantolf, 2000). In the CEFR 2001, however, mediation was given a new, more specific definition in the context of language teaching and learning, which consisted of the everyday activity of making "communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly" (Council of Europe, 2001, pp.87-88). Unfortunately, though, mediation was not developed to its full potential in the CEFR 2001. For example, there were no "can do" descriptors for this particular ability explaining what students could be expected to do at different proficiency levels. For this reason, mediation didn't have the same dramatic influence on the field of language teaching and learning as other parts of the CEFR 2001.

However, mediation did catch the eye of a small number of practitioners, who – perhaps not surprisingly given the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in their society – found the potential of training students in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural mediation particularly exciting. Mediation quickly began to find its way into language classrooms throughout Europe. In Germany, for example, it started to appear in school curricula in the early 2000s. In Greece, on the other hand, mediation became a basic component of the KPG exam in 2003.

In 2014, the Council of Europe began developing a new set of "can do" descriptors for mediation. A provisional copy of the updated CEFR was released in 2018; the final version, in 2020. In addition to "can do" descriptors, this new *Companion Volume* to the CEFR offers a broader, richer conceptualisation of mediation. It moves beyond the focus on linguistic and cultural mediation in the CEFR 2001 to include mediation related to communication and learning. The authors of the CEFRCV state that this "wider

approach has been taken because of its relevance in increasingly diverse classrooms […] and because mediation is increasingly seen as a part of all learning, but especially of all language learning" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.36).

2 The CEFR

Before looking more carefully at how mediation is defined in the CEFR it would be useful to give a brief overview of the framework itself. The CEFR is a Council of Europe project whose aims are the following:

- promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries
- provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications
- assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-operate their efforts

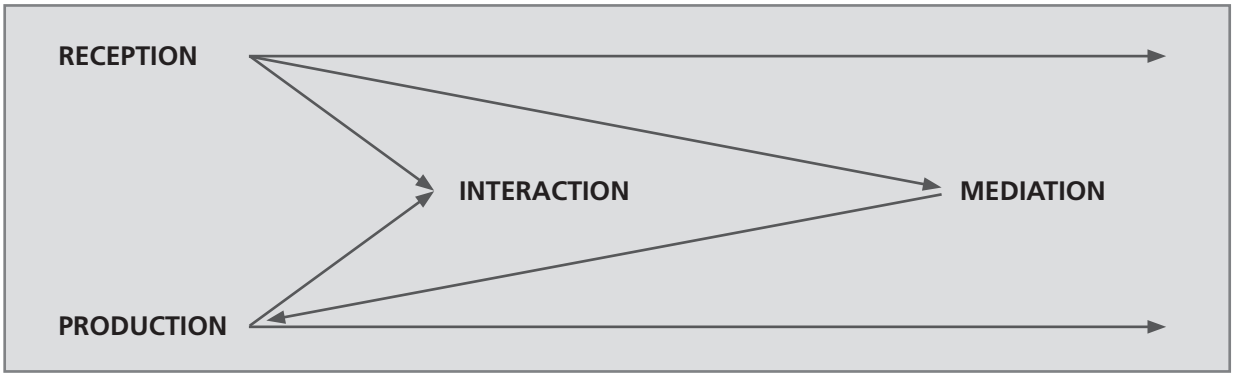
(Council of Europe, 2001, p.25).

With the goal of reaching these aims, the CEFR provides common reference levels for language competence from A1 (lowest) to C2 (highest), which are defined by illustrative descriptors provided in the form of "can do" statements. These are intended to promote a "proficiency perspective" rather than a "deficiency" one (2001, p.26), focusing on what learners *can* do, not what they *can't* do. Since the publication of the CEFR 2001, these common reference levels have permeated language learning and teaching in Europe and beyond, influencing the creation of countless objectives, targets and outcomes in this context (Figueras, 2012). In fact, it is common nowadays to refer to students as A1 or B2 instead of "beginner" or "upper intermediate."

One key concept of the CEFR is its vision of the user/learner as a *social agent* – that is, someone "acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.22). For its authors, therefore, learning a language is not a passive experience but rather one involving personal engagement and active participation. This is particularly relevant to mediation, because, as a mediator, you are in a helping role. You are less concerned with your own opinions than with the communicative needs of the people around you. The mediator can provide this help in a variety of ways: "creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.90).

With this idea of language learners as *social agents* at its core, the CEFR takes an "action-oriented approach" towards language learning and teaching. It does this by attempting to define an exhaustive list of all the possible kinds of *actions*, i.e. real-life tasks, language learners might perform with their languages, which are called *language activities* in the CEFR. These language activities are organised according to four *modes of communication* (production, reception, interaction and mediation), instead of the traditional four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), because, as the authors of the CEFR argue, this better captures the full nature of successful communication in the real world. Production, of course, includes speaking and writing; reception, listening and reading. Interaction, on the other hand, is a bit more complex. It involves both reception and production in a spoken or written dialogue – but, as we know, it is also more than a sum of those parts. Mediation goes one step further. Since it includes the process of developing and co-constructing new meanings, perspectives and ideas, this fourth mode involves reception, production and frequently even interaction. The chart below illustrates the relationship between the four modes.

Figure 1: The four modes of communication (Council of Europe, 2020, p.34)



In a podcast interview, Tim Goodier, one of the co-authors of the CEFRCV, explained the difference between interaction and mediation using the following metaphor:

> *If we see interaction like a game of tennis or ballroom dancing, then mediation is more like playing jazz. It's where you are doing two main things: interpreting the source of a text or something you've read or listened to and expressing it in your own way, and another is that the way you interact and collaborate with others creates something new.*
> (Wiseman, 2020, 1:58)

3 Types of mediation activities

As we have seen, the CEFRCV provides a compendium of language activities – that is, the real-life tasks language learners may need to perform using their languages. For mediation, these language activities are split into the following three macro groups: *Mediating a text*, *Mediating concepts* and *Mediating communication*. We'll start by discussing each of these macro groups individually and then we'll look at what they all have in common.

Mediating a text

This type of mediation "involves passing on to another person the content of a text to which they do not have access, often because of linguistic, cultural, semantic or technical barriers" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 91). Note that a *text* in this context could refer to a written, spoken, visual or multimodal text that contains some type of information or message, such as a magazine article, an oral presentation or conversation, a graph or infographic, or even a picture book. In this type of mediation, there is always both a *source text* – a text containing source information – and a *target text* – a new text created by the mediator through which they can pass on the source information to their target audience.

For *Mediating a text*, the CEFRCV (2020, pp. 92–108) defines the following language activities:

- **Relaying specific information** refers to the way some particular piece of information of immediate relevance is extracted from the source text and relayed to someone else.
- **Explaining data** refers to the transformation of visual information into a verbal text, such as figures found in graphs, diagrams, etc.
- **Processing text** involves understanding the information and/or arguments included in the source text and then transferring these to another text, usually in a more condensed form, in a way that is appropriate to the context.

- **Translating a written text**[1] is the informal process of spontaneously giving a translation, in speech or in writing, of a written text, such as a notice, letter, e-mail or other means of communication.
- **Note-taking** concerns the ability to grasp key information and write coherent notes.
- **Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)** focuses on expression of the effect that a work has on the user/learner as an individual.
- **Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)** concerns more formal, intellectual reactions to creative texts.

Common activities that involve a degree of *Mediating a text* are information gap or jigsaw activities, peer or open class presentations involving a research phase, a film or book review, a report based on data, to name just a few.

Mediating concepts

Mediating concepts, on the other hand, "refers to the process of facilitating access to knowledge and concepts for others, particularly if they may be unable to access this directly on their own" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 91). Parents, mentors and teachers will often find themselves in situations where they have to mediate concepts. However, the CEFR highlights that this type of mediation is also a key aspect of collaborative learning and work that produces new ideas and conclusions. In this context, everybody in the group may be acting as a mediator at some point during the task. In practice, this type of mediation overlaps to a degree with the principles behind the **Cooperative Learning** movement, which stresses the importance of positive interdependence and individual accountability in collaborative activities (Anderson, 2019).

For *Mediating concepts*, the CEFRCV (Council of Europe, 2020, pp. 108–113) breaks the types of mediation into two groups: collaborating in a group (constructing and elaborating meaning with others) and leading group work (creating the conditions for the exchange and development of new concepts):

- **Collaborating in a group**
  - **Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers** refers to when users/learners contribute to successful collaboration in a group that they belong to, usually with a specific shared objective or communicative task in mind. They are concerned with making conscious interventions where appropriate to orient the discussion, balance contributions and help to overcome communication difficulties within the group.
  - **Collaborating to construct meaning** is concerned with stimulating and developing ideas as a member of a group. It is particularly relevant to collaborative work in problem solving, brainstorming, concept development and project work.
- **Leading group work**
  - **Managing interaction** is intended for situations in which the user/learner has a designated lead role to organise communicative activity between members of a group or several groups, for example as a teacher, workshop facilitator, trainer or meeting chair. They have a conscious approach to managing phases of communication that may include both plenary communication with the whole group, and/or management of communication within and between sub-groups.

1 The CEFRCV only mentions written texts as source texts for this language activity. In this book, however, we've also included translating tasks with spoken and visual source texts. In our experience, there are times where you informally translate a spoken or visual text in much the same way you would a written one.

- **Encouraging conceptual talk** involves providing scaffolding to enable another person or persons to themselves construct a new concept, rather than passively following a lead. The user/learner may do this as a member of a group, taking temporarily the role of facilitator, or they may have the designated role of an expert (for example, an animator, teacher, trainer or manager) who is leading the group in order to help them understand concepts.

Typical classroom activities involving mediating concepts are those in which students are engaged in group work (for example to produce a poster or write a report), problem-solving tasks or group discussions with specific success criteria. However, the focus of the activity would be on the *process* of the group work rather than the *product*. To emphasise the mediation of concepts in groupwork, it helps if we assign specific roles or responsibilities to different members of the group (Goodier, 2020). If we put students (particularly younger learners) in a leading role during this sort of collaborative group work, we can help them develop leadership and other valuable life skills (Chiappini, 2020).

Mediating communication

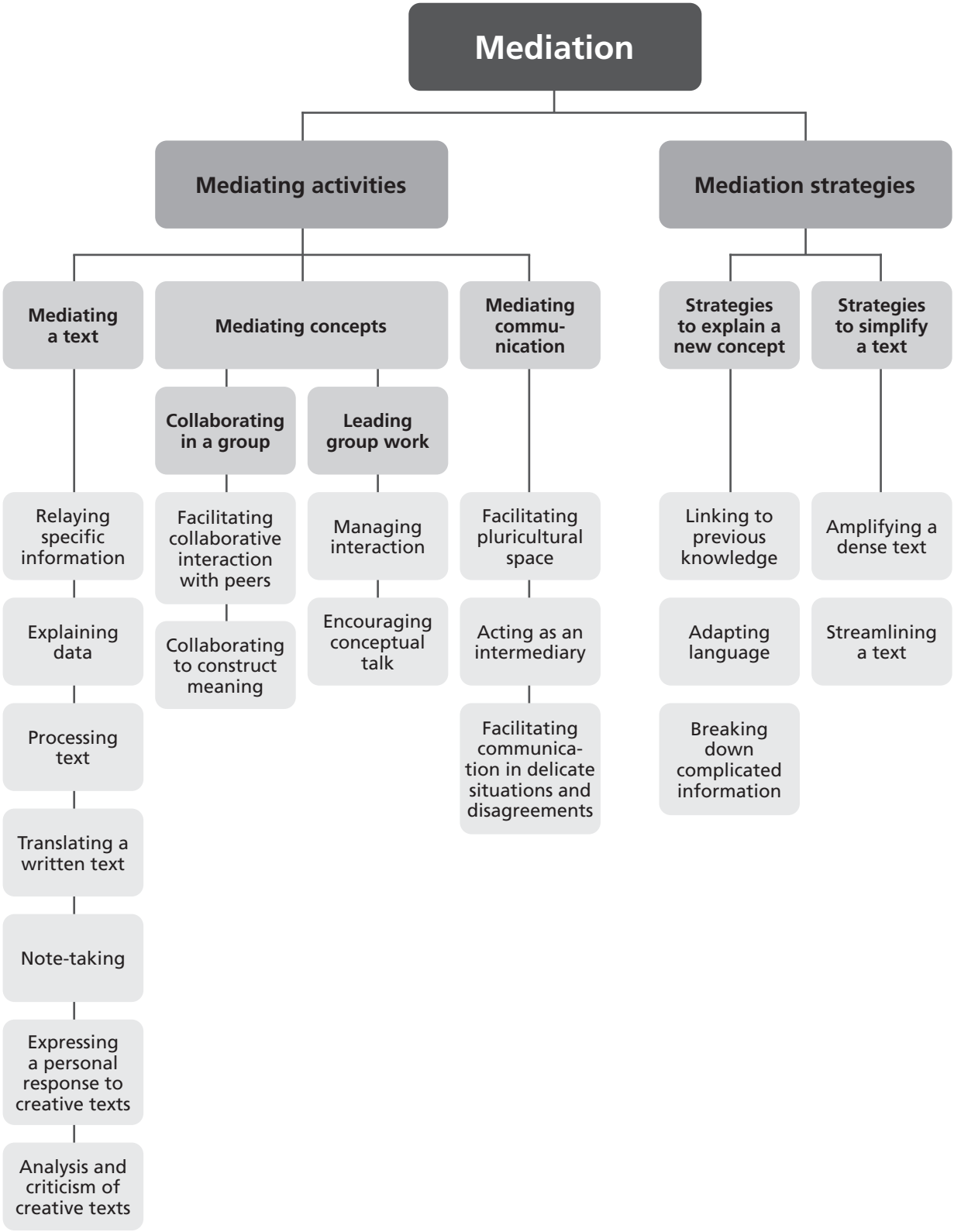
The third type of mediation, *Mediating communication*, "aims to facilitate understanding and shape successful communication between users/learners who may have individual, sociocultural, sociolinguistic or intellectual differences in standpoint" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 91). A successful mediator in this context positively influences the interaction among all the participants. This is the type of mediation that is closest to people's traditional idea of mediation in the context of diplomacy or dispute resolution. However, the CEFRCV mainly focuses on how this type of mediation is used in everyday personal encounters, either social or professional. The CEFRCV (Council of Europe, 2020, pp.114–117) defines the following types of activities for *Mediating communication*:

- **Facilitating pluricultural space** refers to the user/learner facilitating a positive interactive environment for successful communication between participants of different cultural backgrounds, including in multicultural contexts. It involves creating a shared space between linguistically and culturally different interlocutors (that is, the capacity to deal with "otherness", to identify similarities and differences, to build on known and unknown cultural features, and so on) in order to enable communication and collaboration.
- **Acting as an intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues)** refers to situations where the user/learner acts as a plurilingual individual who mediates across languages and cultures to the best of their ability in an informal situation.
- **Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements** involves the user/learner in a formal role to mediate in a disagreement between third parties, or in an informal one trying to resolve a misunderstanding, delicate situation or disagreement. The user/learner is primarily concerned with clarifying what the problem is and what the parties want, helping them understand each other's positions.

In the context of the classroom, it is interesting to note that the activities described above for *Mediating communication* are actually quite common but usually unplanned – that is, they are the result of inevitable conflict, disagreement or misunderstandings that occur while using a second language. To help students better cope with these situations, we can use roleplay or drama activities to give students low-stakes practice with the sort of high-stakes situations that await them outside of class (Chiappini & Mansur, 2020).

In the diagram below from the CEFRCV, you can see the complete list of the mediation activities described above. Note that in addition to mediation activities there are also mediation strategies, which will be discussed further in the micro-skills section.

Figure 2: Mediation activities and strategies (Council of Europe, 2020, p.90)



These three 'flavours" of mediation, as Goodier (2020) calls them, might seem quite different at first. In reality, though, they have a great deal in common. If you are in the role of the mediator in any of these activities, you will have to handle the communication of meanings and ideas, while at the same time taking into consideration the communicative needs of your audience, listener, reader or collaborators. As mentioned earlier, whether you are mediating a text, concepts or communication, you are in a helping role; you are less concerned with your own opinions or needs and you are more focused on successfully facilitating interaction, understanding or collaboration. In the words of Coste & Cavalli (2015, p. 15), "the aim of the mediation process, defined in the most general terms, is to reduce the gap between two poles that are distant or in tension with each other." To do this, you will need a certain amount of emotional intelligence and empathy in order to understand the needs, viewpoints and even emotions of the people you are trying to help. It's also worth noting that in most mediation tasks you will find yourself using a group of common strategies, such as adapting language and summarising. Do refer to the micro-skills section for further discussion of these "mediation strategies".

As you can see in the diagram above, there are more language activities, and therefore more "can do" descriptors, for the macro group of *Mediating a text*, which is why this book contains a wider variety of tasks focused on this type of mediation. However, in practice, these three macro groups of mediation often overlap. So, even though we have designed each of the tasks in this book around one specific language activity, we found it natural to include more than one type of mediation within some of the tasks. For example, the pair or groupwork stages in a *Mediating a text* task often involve some degree of *Mediating communication* or *Mediating concepts*. Likewise, students may have to mediate texts as part of a task that is mainly focused on the mediation of concepts or communication.

4 Barriers to communication

In real life – or indeed in the classroom – the need for mediation often arises due to some kind of barrier to communication. These barriers might be linguistic, cultural, semantic or technical. However, it's important to note that a common barrier that gives rise to mediation is simply a lack of information. For example, we often find ourselves summarising the main events of a TV series that our listeners would be perfectly capable of watching themselves, but perhaps they simply haven't had the opportunity or time to do so. At times, we may even mediate in the absence of any kind of barrier to communication. This happens when we are articulating thoughts, often together with others, "groping towards a new understanding" (Piccardo et al, 2019).

5 Intralinguistic vs. cross-linguistic mediation

One fascinating thing about mediation is that it can be intralinguistic or cross-linguistic. In intralinguistic mediation, our students would be using source information and producing target texts in the same language (e.g. English). In cross-linguistic mediation, on the other hand, our students would be using source information in their L1 and mediate it in the target language (e.g. English). Take this B1 descriptor from the scales for *Relaying specific information* (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 94):

> Can relay (in Language B) the contents of detailed instructions or directions, provided these are clearly articulated (in Language A).

In this descriptor, Language A could be the student's L1 and Language B English. This type of cross-linguistic task would therefore involve informal translation. However, there is a big difference between the type of translation in this activity and the work of professional interpreters and translators, who possess competences, both linguistic and technical, far beyond that of a typical language learner. Instead, the

translation that occurs in a cross-linguistic mediation task consists of the kind commonly found in informal, everyday situations among speakers of more than one language.

Another important difference between cross-linguistic mediation and translation is that, when in the role of the mediator, you are expected to put information into your own words. You are also expected to prioritise information. Depending on its relevance to the communicative needs of your target audience, as a mediator, you not only *can* but are *expected to* add or leave out information, change the discourse, register or genre of the source text, etc. (Dendrinos, 2013). This is starkly different to professional translation, where the translator is expected to produce a new text that is as faithful to the original as possible.

There is one important point to make about how the descriptors for mediation in the CEFRCV are presented. According to the authors of the CEFRCV, "Language A" and "Language B" as in the B1 descriptor above don't actually have to be different languages; they could also be varieties of the same language or different registers of the same language. In fact, they could also be identical with no linguistic barrier to overcome, because, as we have seen above, a simple lack of information is common context for mediation. Therefore, the B1 descriptor (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 94) above could be rewritten in the following way and still "count" as mediation:

> Can relay the contents of detailed instructions or directions, provided these are clearly articulated.

7 Challenges with cross-linguistic mediation

Using the L1 in class

If you have ever lived abroad and your friends or family came to visit you, the idea of cross-linguistic mediation will be very familiar to you. Perhaps you had to explain the contents of a menu or summarise a rental car agreement. If we think of our students as language *users* in addition to language *learners*, as the CEFRCV proposes, then it makes perfect sense to engage with this type of authentic context in the second language classroom – and therefore, to work with both English and the students' L1 in class. When you think about it, the use of the L1 in class opens the door to exciting possibilities of exploiting countless real-life situations involving cross-linguistic mediation that have so far been overlooked in the communicative language classroom.

However, we realise that some teachers might not be entirely comfortable using the students' L1 in class. For many teachers, the ideal English class is an English-only one, where the L1 is banned. Today the prevalence of "direct methods" and the idealisation of the native speaker as the best model for "proper" teaching still remain widespread in ELT. However, the use of L1 in class is no longer the "skeleton in the cupboard" (Deller & Rinvolucri, 2002, p.5) that it once was. Indeed, since the publication of Guy Cook's *Translation in Language Teaching* (2010), a consensus has grown in the academic community that a strategic, principled use of the L1 can in fact be quite beneficial to language learning. Given its real-life applications, cross-linguistic mediation is just this type of strategic, principled use of the L1.

What is more, if we acknowledge the L1 and put it to a useful purpose in class, we are showing respect for the students' mother tongue. Dendrinos (2006), for her part, sees the inclusion of mediation in the original CEFR 2001 as a sign of a growing positive attitude towards the idea of speaking more than one language. It also reflects the reality that our students (and we teachers) exist in a plurilingual space, where the ability to move from one language to another is completely natural and should be a source of pride. Indeed, for the Council of Europe, plurilingual and pluricultural competence are key aspects of the aims of language education (Piccardo et al., 2019).

Limited knowledge of the students' L1

Another challenge is that some teachers will have limited proficiency in their students' L1. They may fear that by engaging with the students' L1 in class they may risk exposing themselves to ridicule. This is obviously a legitimate concern. As we hope the tasks in this book illustrate, there is plenty that can be done to improve students' mediation skills with intralinguistic tasks – that is, tasks only involving English. However, if you are in this position and would like to use cross-linguistic tasks, a good crutch is to use texts that have already been professionally translated, such as the sort of brochures available at the tourism office in your town or city. You could use the English version as a cheat sheet when checking to see if students have left out any important information in the L1 text. Though it may be intimidating, one benefit of using cross-linguistic tasks for teachers with limited knowledge of their students' L1 is that it promotes an understanding of the language learning process and creates a sense of "comradeship, the feeling of being on a shared journey" (Chiappini & Mansur, 2020).

Multilingual groups

One last challenge to address when working with cross-linguistic mediation tasks is to what extent this is possible with multilingual groups, where students don't share an L1 or understand each other's L1s. This context certainly limits the types of possible cross-linguistic tasks. However, you could still have students do mediation tasks where, for example, they research a topic in their L1 and then transmit this information in English to their classmates. This type of mediation activity allows students the opportunity to share aspects of their pluricultural identity that might never come to the surface in a strictly "English-only" learning context.

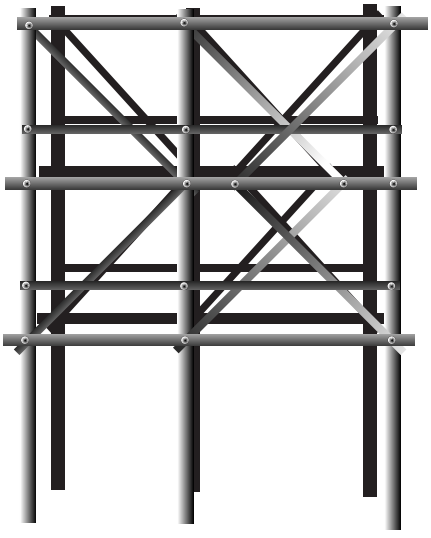
1 Mediation strategies

As described in the CEFRCV, mediation strategies are used by the mediator to "clarify meaning and facilitate understanding" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 117). Many of these strategies will be familiar to teachers as "communication" strategies. However, the authors of the CEFRCV have included them within this language mode and have called them "mediation" strategies because, as we will see in more detail in this section, they come in particularly handy to language users – and therefore our students – when they need to mediate texts, concepts and communication.

To make these strategies more accessible to teachers, however, we have adapted the list from the CEFRCV mentioned in the introduction, adding in a few more based on our experience teaching mediation. In each of the mediation activities in the book, we have included a section where you will find the most important strategies that your students need to use to complete them. You can use this list as a reference as you read through the book:

1. Selecting and omitting information
2. Summarising
3. Paraphrasing
4. Translating
5. Transforming visual information into verbal text
6. Linking to previous knowledge
7. Explaining
8. Combining
9. Expanding
10. Adapting language
11. Breaking down complicated information
12. Explaining sociolinguistic and sociocultural elements

Strategies and tips for scaffolding



As we have said above, mediation strategies aren't only relevant to mediation. These are indeed communication strategies that our students might already be using when doing language activities related to the other language modes (i.e. reception, production and interaction). Some of our students will obviously find some of these communication strategies easier or just more natural to use. However, all of them will certainly benefit from further training in mediation strategies. As Dendrinos (2013) observes when talking about mediation strategies and candidates' performance in mediation tasks in the Greek national exams (KPG), "it is important to stress that with training and coaching, foreign language learners and exam candidates are bound to have better results, as with all types of other language practices". Scaffolding these valuable strategies in the ELT classroom, then, seems to be a good path to follow to help students become more successful mediators.

In the following section, we are going to explain each mediation strategy and give you ideas on how you can scaffold each one of them in your mediation lessons.

1 Selecting and omitting information

Before mediating (i.e. before "producing a target text", "talking ideas through" while collaborating in group work, or "moderating" communication), students in the role of the mediator may need to tackle one or a series of source texts – that is, read written texts, listen to spoken texts or interpret visual data – in order to identify meanings. Students will then have to sift through these meanings to select only the information that is relevant to the target situation and context.

To provide our students with specific training for this strategy, we should first guide them to discover where key information is found in written texts (e.g. relation between topic sentence and supporting ideas in paragraphs), spoken texts (e.g. intonation) and visual data (e.g. relation between numbers, texts and images). Then, in preparation for a mediation task, we can ask our older or higher-level students to find the key points in the source text and then underline or summarise them in a short list in their notebooks. Our younger or lower-level students, on the other hand, may find it easier to choose the key point or points from a given list of options that we will have carefully prepared beforehand. Another constructive way of raising students' awareness of how to select and omit information is to give them the opportunity to reflect on what makes information relevant or not. Once they have identified the key points in a text, we can lead an open-class discussion of these, where students can share their ideas and give reasons why they selected certain ones and omitted others.

2 Summarising

Summarising or *streamlining* a text basically means giving a short account of its main points. Our students might need to summarise source information to pass on the main points contained in a text (*Mediating a text*), to give a rundown of what has been said during a discussion and decide on the next step to take (*Mediating concepts*), or to quickly sum up the key issues in a debate (*Mediating communication*).

To train our students in this strategy, we could ask our younger or lower-level students to read or listen to a source text – or a shorter section of it – and then choose the most appropriate summary from a list of options, which could be individual sentences or longer summaries. With older or higher-level students, we could ask them to identify a limited number of keywords in the source text and then use these to write a sentence or a shorter text that summarises it. Another way to train our students to streamline texts could be to provide them with a gapped written summary of a text they have just read, and ask them to fill it in with keywords. The level of difficulty will certainly depend on the topic as well as the lexis and the structures present in the text. This activity would not only provide students with training in identifying the main ideas in a text, but it would also provide them with a model of a good summary, helping them notice key elements such as the choice of key points that are relayed, the order in which the ideas are developed, the length and so on.

3 Paraphrasing

If summarising may imply reusing the same keywords that students have identified in a source text or selecting and communicating main ideas, paraphrasing means using words and language that are different from the source text in order to relay the same message or information contained there.

Our older or higher-level students might be better able to handle sentence transformation exercises, which provide effective training in paraphrasing. We could also help them learn how to use the dictionary or thesaurus more effectively, for example by focusing their attention on the different levels of register or frequency of a lexical item or grammatical structure. Our younger or lower-level students, on the other