

Testing & Evaluation Assessment

TEASIG “Testing Mediation?” Webinar Q&A 9-9-20

1. Is the German version of the Companion Volume already available? **Yes. Available through your book shop or from Klett Publishing.**
2. Thanks for sharing this. Are these Mediation scoring criteria? It seems you are scoring written production competence as well... maybe you score them as holistically and together, or twice?
Sorry, if this point didn't come through. What we meant to demonstrate was that a “spiky profile” (i.e. what the CEFR suggests) would include both mediation skills and linguistic skills. These would **not be rated holistically, although depending on the context, a total score would be given. When the focus is on testing MEDIATION, the **weighting** should reflect that mediation skills are more important than purely linguistic skills, i.e. provide a “spiky profile”.**
3. This is for me an interaction between two people exchanging different opinions, where is the process of mediation? Don't we need a third party who takes over the role of mediator?
What you mention is in fact, a widespread (mis)understanding of “mediation” in Europe. The construct suggested by the CEFR-CV, however, goes far beyond this and, although third party mediation may be part of it, it builds on long traditions of theory of cognition, Hegelian ontology, social constructivism etc. – in other words: its theoretical foundation seems to us very solid. [For an elaboration of the theoretical basis, see E. Picardo/B. North (2019) *The action-oriented approach. A dynamic vision of language education.*] Looking at the descriptors in the CEFR-CV carefully makes it clear that a third party is not always necessary for mediation to take place.
4. We don't necessarily need a third party in a mediation speaking task but obviously the video we watched was not a good example of an oral mediation task!
The two videos we showed were not meant to illustrate “mediation” but in case 1 to demonstrate the opposite of non-confrontational discourse (i.e. the non-mastery of mediation discourse) and in case 2 to give an example of distinguishing between purely linguistic competence (which was poor) and mediation competence or, put differently, relationship-building (which was excellent). Both tasks are suitable as mediation tasks, depending on which of the descriptors are chosen from the CEFR-CV as important for the context. A task to illustrate this for video 1 which can be used in class as formative assessment was described in some detail in the webinar. For video 2, the task (planning a holiday together) was described briefly. The relevant descriptive scales for mediation can be found in the CEFR-CV.

5. In light of these videos, could you define "mediation"?
We use the definition given in the CEFR-CV, which is: "Co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement between the individual and social level" (CEFR-CV p. 33). This, clearly, is the broadest possible definition which is broken down into several mediation skills, both cognitive and relational, as shown on the diagram which we reproduced. For a better understanding it may be helpful to point out that this construct goes far beyond the widespread use of the word which focusses only on a "third party" promoting understanding among conflicting persons (although this too is part of it, of course).
6. Accuracy... in language A or B (which one are we testing)? And if I'm not wrong, it's not included in Mediation descriptors...
Linguistic accuracy is, in fact, not described in the mediation scales. Mediation is not always between two different languages. That this may sometimes be the case is indicated by the use of brackets. The point we are trying to make is that in real life mediation skills are generally far more important than linguistic (e.g. grammatical) accuracy (with certain exceptions, of course). It is for this reason that on our slides the boxes for the mediation scales were shown as larger than those describing linguistic skills. This was to indicate that if the task is primarily to test mediation, these aspects of the performance should be weighted more heavily.
7. This can be very good to help students to be more confident in class and in social interactions; but how to can have confident and relaxed students in a test?
Our answer is the same as given by serious test-providers in general: Inform and prepare students as best as you can and familiarise them with format, criteria, mock tests etc. This was why we indicated (albeit briefly) the main features of good tests and the stages a test should go through. However more detail on this would have gone beyond the subject and scope of this webinar.
8. In relation to communicative competence can we go even further in identifying even more communication skills and what could they be? Would this be to the detriment of purely linguistic skills?
We feel that both the original and in particular the new descriptor scales in the CEFR-CV provide more descriptions of communicative competence than in any other document which we have come across. And yes, the more we focus on communicative competence, the more linguistic accuracy is moved to the background. Encouraging learners to focus on communication rather than on "getting the grammar right" also helps them to relax more (see previous question), be inventive and take more risks, all important aspects of learning a language in order to communicate.
9. In the examples (videos) presented it was not at all obvious what the mediation test task was and which were the criteria of evaluating cross-language mediation. Isn't that true?
We did not show any examples of cross-language mediation, as this is only one type of mediation described in the CEFR-CV. We felt this was too specific for an

international audience as well as, for us, not by any means the most important type of mediation.

10. My question is: can you see this influencing language policy in terms of immigration? e.g. rather than the four skills reading writing listening speaking, but an inclusion of the new macrofunctions?

We unfortunately have little influence on how the new macro-functions could influence migration policies, although the focus on communication rather than linguistic accuracy should help a great deal. Listening to refugees on Lesbos in the current catastrophe who speak English demonstrates this. Any “mistakes” they may make when describing the situation and their plight are totally irrelevant in communicating their message. It is true that the CEFR has sometimes been criticised for providing a pretext for social exclusion (e.g. of migrants). We feel that it is not the CEFR which is to be blamed, but rather those (e.g. governments and immigration authorities) who are using it wrongly and wrongfully.

As well as this, the CEFR-CV does away with native-speaker standards and explicitly acknowledges regional, cultural, social etc. ‘norms’. We very much hope that this will make it harder to abuse its descriptive scales for exclusion policies.

A question from the chat box:

Surely the developments you describe are related to medical communication – the OET does not really see this as related to linguistic criteria.

The OET distinguishes (very much in the sense of the CEFR-CV) between Linguistic Criteria (*Intelligibility / Fluency / Appropriateness of Language / Resources of Language and Expression*) and Clinical Communication Criteria. The latter include criteria of *Relational Mediation* (*Relationship building / Understanding and incorporating the patient’s perspective*) and *Cognitive Mediation* (*Providing structure / Information gathering / Information giving*). The criteria used in the OET relate closely to many of the descriptors for mediation in the CEFR-CV. We do not see, therefore, why you feel the OET does not take linguistic criteria into account or does not relate these to medical communication. We feel that the opposite is true. But it goes beyond purely linguistic criteria exactly in the sense the CEFR-CV is suggesting. We see this as an example of how criteria other than linguistic can play an important (perhaps the most important) role in a test.