PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM

ECSPM — European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism

Linguistic mediation for higher education language instructors and students

The Forum is hosted and co-organised by the **Faculty of Linguistics, National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute"**

Using and learning languages in a complex world: focus on mediation

Enrica Piccardo
OISE-University of Toronto
enrica.piccardo@utoronto.ca

From a linear vision of communication and learning…

- Traditionally, communication and language learning have been seen as **linear and monolingual**:
  - learn to communicate a message in <u>one language at the time</u>,
  - learn in the class in view of using the language <u>later in the "real world" outside</u> (language + culture)
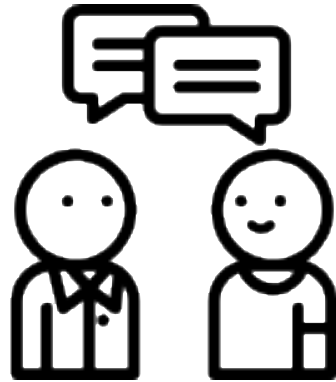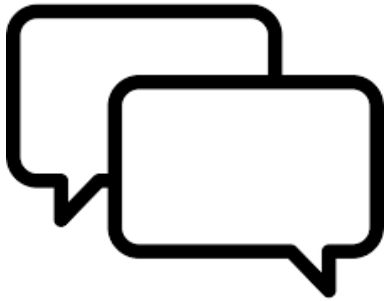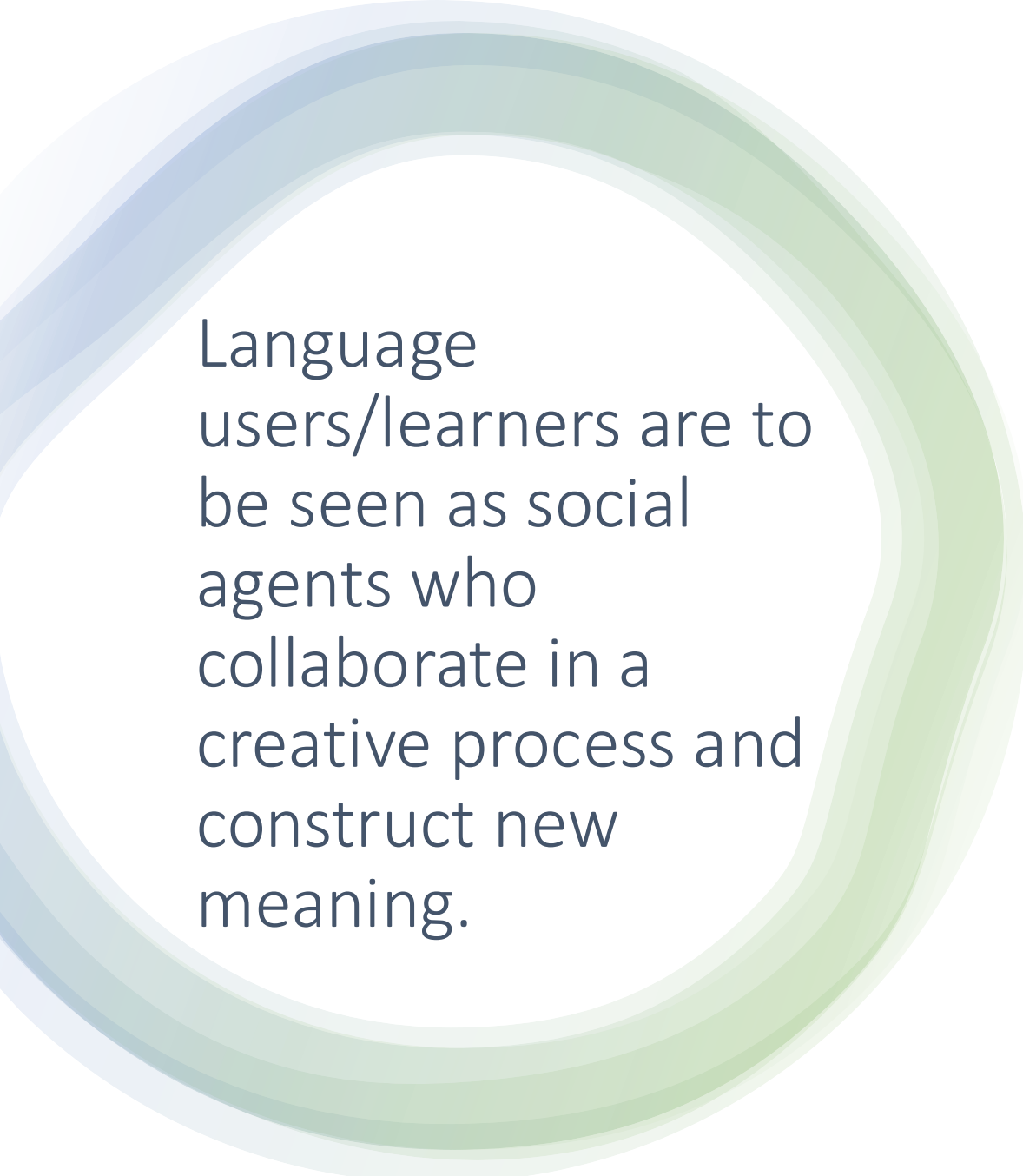
… to a complex vision

- Learners do not learn languages one at the time, all their linguistic/cultural resources are active in their brain

- The class is not a tidy space of domesticated reality, it is a messy and dynamic authentic social space in which learners are operating in real time

Image by mego-studio on Freepik

Language users/learners are to be seen as social agents who collaborate in a creative process and construct new meaning.

*"a language ... **emerges** from the multiple interactions of its speakers" ... "learning a language is not a single process of emergence but a succession of cycles of emergence"* (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008, p. 61, I highlight).

Away from linear view: languages are not collections of interchangeable labels to be applied to objects and concepts

- Language emerges from complex webs of actions, which all require some form of **mediation**.

- Language use/learning is a semiotic, non-linear activity nurtured by individuals' (**plurilingual**) repertoires and trajectories

- Mediation is at the centre of understanding, thinking, meaning-making, collaborating – acting as a **social agent**.

- In language education:

   the classroom and all other social spaces are spaces of collective knowledge, of shared understanding, thus natural settings for mediation.

Language is something we do, something we do together

Moving from **language as an entity** to *language as an activity, a process* (<mark>*languaging*</mark>) implies embracing a mediational perspective

Both communication and language learning are now seen as *situated* and *complex*

Mediation at the core of knowledge (co)construction, (re)construction

A theoretical framework shaped by Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST): situated learning, action and affordances

The **mind, body, and environment** (which includes culture) make up a **complex dynamic system**.

Learning thus needs to be rooted in **situated dynamic learning situations**

(Masciotra, Roth, & Morel, 2007).

Learning occurs through '**perception in action**' (van Lier, 2004: 97): user/ learner seen as a **social agent** who gives their attention to **affordances** in the environment, in order to carry out a task and/ or achieve a goal.

Learning builds on the capacity to **perceive affordances** (Käufer & Chemero, 2015), which can be thought of as **invitations to action**.

To perceive affordances learners **need to develop agency**

'Cognitive agents experience the world perceptually through **the mediation of action**' (Ramstead, Veissière, & Kirmayer, 2016: 4).

How can we help teachers implement this new vision in their classes?

2001

2020

CEFR

(Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

```
Council of        →    Democracy &       →    Learning,
Europe                 Human Rights           Teaching and
                                              Assessment
                                                  ↓
A living project  ←    Learners as        ←    "Can do"
... Companion          social agents           Descriptors
Volume in
2020
```
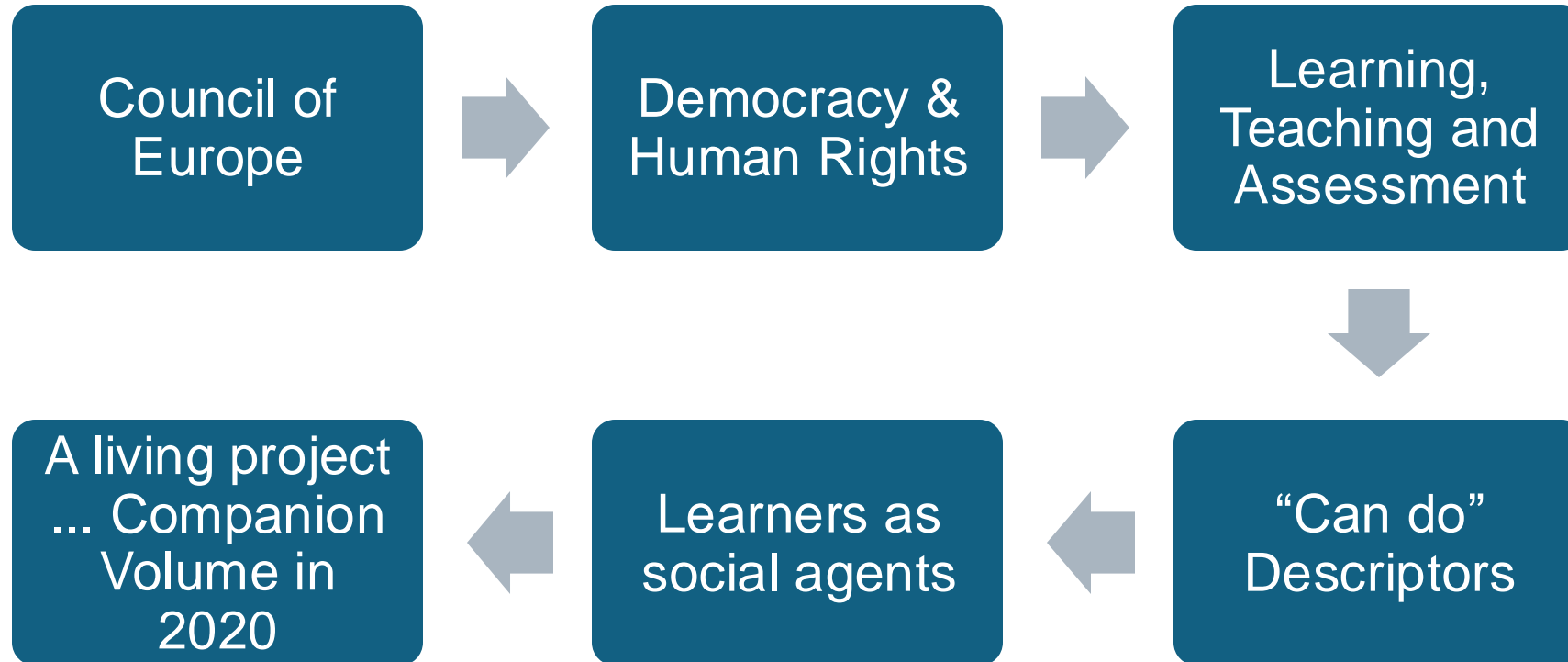
CEFR 2001:
Pioneering a new vision

CEFRCV 2020: new vision developed
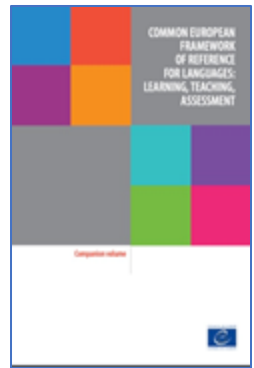
User/Learner as Social agent

listening + reading

Reception

speaking + writing

Production

Interaction

Mediation

Speaker/Hearer

Participant

Social agent

Code: *complexity accuracy/ fluency*

Social use of the language

Co-construction of meaning

Mobilising general and **plurilingual / pluricultural** competences

Social agent: Acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process. (CEFRCV, 2020, p. 22)

By pioneering the idea of linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource and valuing uneven dynamic profiles the CEFR 2001 was very forward-looking:

- focus on the agency of the user/learner,

- viewing learners as social agents who mobilise *all* their competences, including their general (i.e. personal, non-linguistic) competences, and strategies in the fulfilment of a task, with a commensurate improvement of those competences and strategies as a result

This vision was a call to move away from seeing language as a code to be taught, with subtraction of marks for mistakes, towards seeing *language as action* in experiential learning.

The CEFR descriptive scheme

Overall Language Proficiency			
General Competences	Communicative language competences	Communicative language activities	Communication strategies
Savoir	Linguistic	Reception	Reception
Savoir-faire	Sociolinguistic	Production	Production
Savoir-être	Pragmatic	Interaction	Interaction
Savoir apprendre		Mediation	Mediation
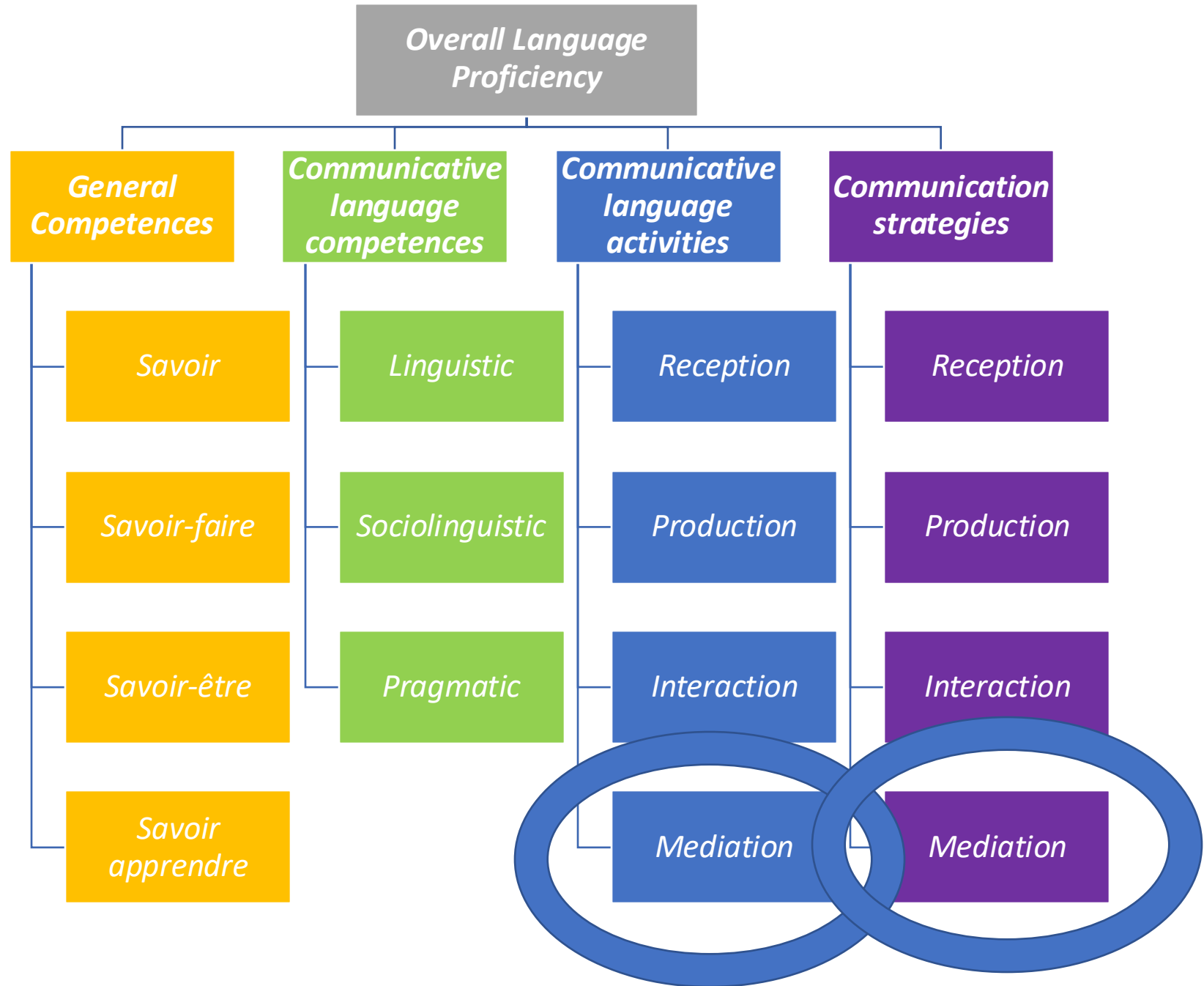
Mediation as social practice (Dendrinos, 2024): reflection and experimentation in the last 20 years

- **Cross-linguistic mediation** was developed and introduced at a national level in curricula and exams (e.g., Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Austria) in two forms:

  "providing information from a source text that an interested party has no access to, or explaining a message contained in a text (verbal or visual) to someone who does not understand it"

  and

  "acting as a *go-between,* an intermediary whose job is to help someone understand the message delivered" (Dendrinos, 2013)

- **Intralinguistic mediation**: these forms of mediation can also happen within the same language

In 2020 the new CEFR provides guidance to put the new vision into practice and foregrounds the three key concepts of Plurilingualism, Mediation and Action-orientation
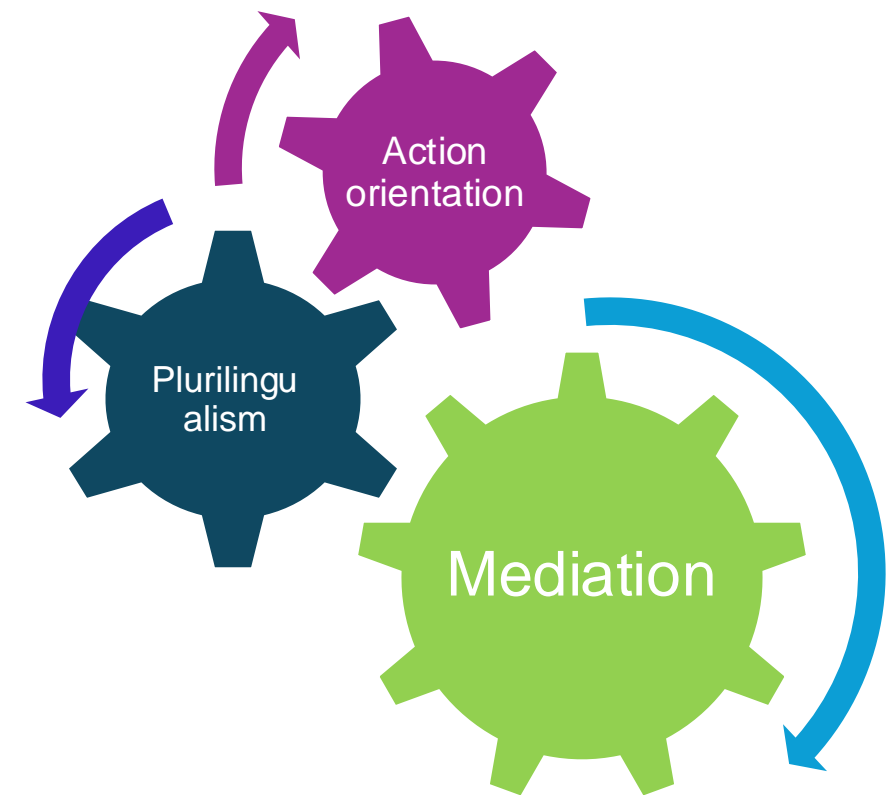
Plurilingualism: the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual learner/user;
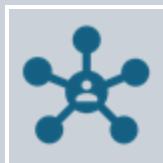
Mediation: the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning within and across languages

Action-orientation: learning happens in real-life oriented scenarios and tasks that make space for agency and collaboration

Action orientation

Plurilingualism

Mediation

Categories for mediation in the CEFR 2020

The new CEFR Companion Volume (CoE, 2020) operationalizes mediation into calibrated and validated descriptors

Mediating communication

Mediating concepts

Mediating a text

Mediation strategies

The CEFR mediation categories help see what social agents do while languaging,

in **_Mediating concepts_**, social agents are languaging as they think things through together
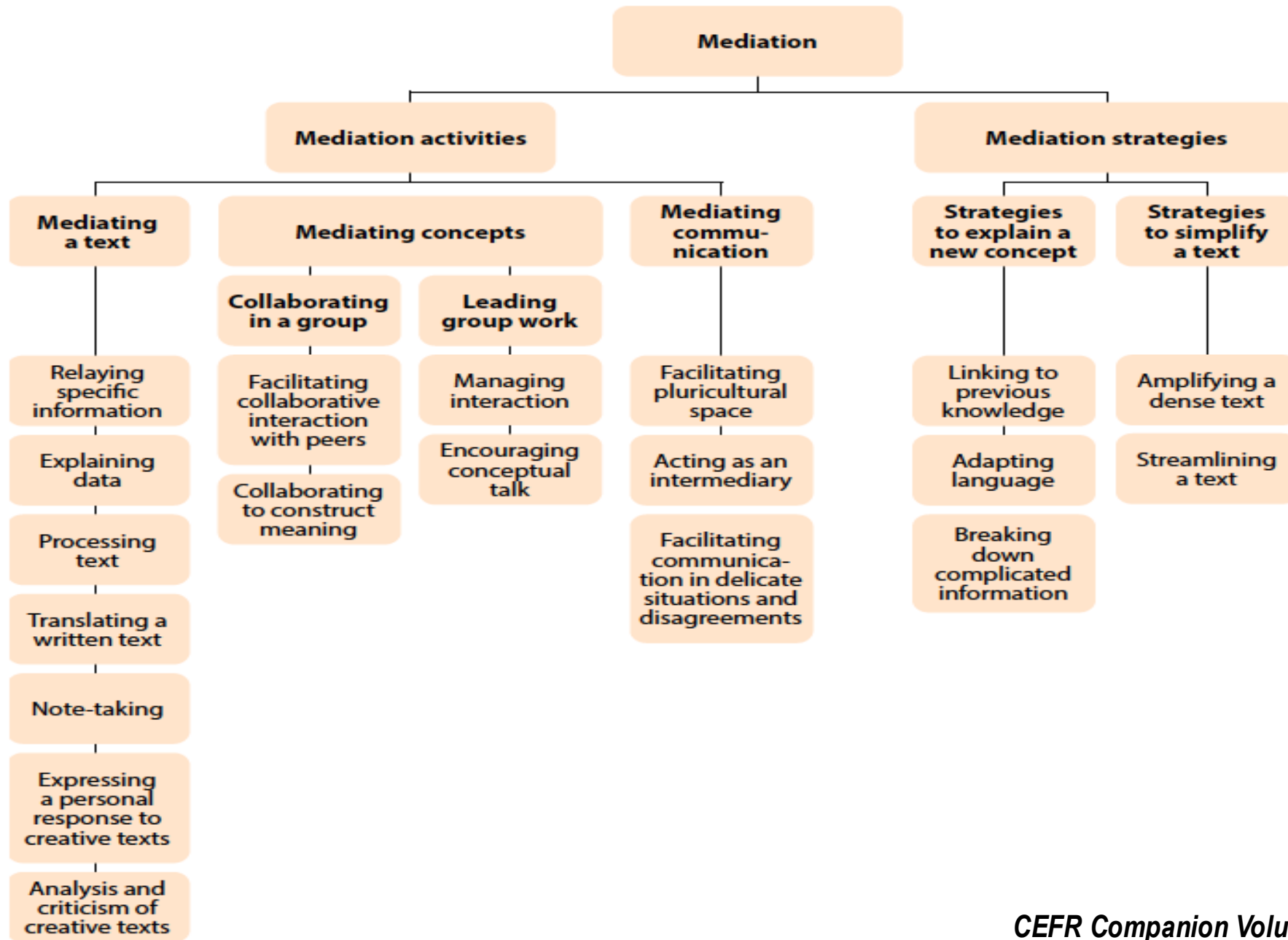
in **_Mediating communication_** they are languaging in the process of self-other regulation

in **_Mediating a text_** they are languaging to find formulations that enable understanding of the text itself for themselves and for or with others.

Figure 14 – Mediation activities and strategies

```
                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │    Mediation    │
                                    └────────┬────────┘
                         ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
              ┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
              │ Mediation activities │              │ Mediation strategies │
              └──────────┬───────────┘              └──────────┬───────────┘
        ┌────────────┬───┴──────────────┐              ┌────────┴─────────┐
  ┌───────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌───────────┐  ┌───────────┐
  │ Mediating │  │  Mediating   │  │  Mediating   │  │ Strategies│  │ Strategies│
  │  a text   │  │  concepts    │  │   commu-     │  │ to explain│  │ to simplify│
  │           │  │              │  │   nication   │  │ a new     │  │ a text    │
  │           │  │              │  │              │  │ concept   │  │           │
  └───────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └───────────┘  └───────────┘
```

Mediating a text

- Relaying specific information
- Explaining data
- Processing text
- Translating a written text
- Note-taking
- Expressing a personal response to creative texts
- Analysis and criticism of creative texts

Mediating concepts

Collaborating in a group
- Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
- Collaborating to construct meaning

Leading group work
- Managing interaction
- Encouraging conceptual talk

Mediating communication

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

Strategies to explain a new concept

- Linking to previous knowledge
- Adapting language
- Breaking down complicated information

Strategies to simplify a text

- Amplifying a dense text
- Streamlining a text

Examples of descriptors

Mediating concepts B1

(Encouraging conceptual talk)

- *Can ask people to elaborate on specific points they r___ in their ___ ex___*

(Collaborating to construct meaning)

- *Can repeat part of what someone has said to confirm m___ ___ development of ideas on course.*

Mediating communication B1

(Facilitating pluricultural space)

- *Can act in a supportive manner in intercultural ___ ers, ___ fferent worldviews of other members of the group*

(Facilitating communication in delicate situations)

- *Can demonstrate their understanding of the key issues in a disagr___ent on ___ pic famili___ to them and make simple requests for confirmation and/or clarification.*

Mediating a text B1

(Relaying specific information)

- *Can relay (in Language B) specific information given in straightforward informational texts (e.g. leaflets, brochure entries, notices and letters or e-mails) (in Language A).*

(Processing a text)

- *Can summarise (in Language B) the main points or events in TV programmes and video clips (in Language A), provided they can view them several times*

Mediation and the Pluri-dimension are closely connected

Mediation involves relational, cognitive, linguistic, cultural, and emotional dimensions

Mediation requires an action-oriented approach, so that learners can become real social agents, engaged in real life-oriented collaborative tasks, within scenarios that enable them to construct and mediate meaning, drawing on all possible linguistic and cultural resources.

For instance, learners/social agents:

search for information to understand the meaning (mediating for oneself)

explain (a) text and/or concepts presented in a text

collaborate to mediating concepts, to co-construction of meaning

Create one or more *artefact*-s

Reception (Mediating for oneself)

Mediating texts

Mediatimg concepts

Production (Mediating for/with others)

In a dynamic, action-oriented, plurilingual perspective <u>language learning *is* an act of mediation</u>

Learning happens through «perception in action » (van Lier, 2007 : 97), learners/social agents perceive affordances as invitations to act (Kaüfer & Chemero, 2015),

Learners/social agents are constantly engaged in a process that requires mediation at different levels.

They are mediators:

- when they communicate across languages/ cultures/ language varieties;
- within and across social communities;
- for themselves in a process of cognitive development, for ex. in an ideal dialogue with fictional characters;
- in online environments and distance communication;

and in all this, they engage their mind, senses and their emotions.

Conclusion: Complexity can inform pedagogy

- Complexity should be embraced: **scaffolding** (with **authentic materials**)

- Complexity of **tasks** (multistep, challenge); **language** (_complexity_, accuracy, fluency)

- No 1-to-1 relationship between words and meaning – in/across languages **construction of meaning**

- From discrete items/skills to situated learning multiphase tasks / integrated skills **mediation**

- Language repertoire is holistic, embracing all languages, varieties, registers **plurilingualism**

Thank you! Grazie! Merci beaucoup!

Website of the Council of Europe
www.coe.int/lang-cefr

| WWW.COE.INT | HUMAN RIGHTS | DEMOCRACY | RULE OF LAW | ABOUT US ▾ | English ▾ | Connect 🔒 | 🔍 |

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Home | News and events | The framework ▾ | Key concepts ▾ | Descriptors ▾ | Ideas for implementation ▾ | Resources ▾

The CEFR online :

NEW

📖 **A Guide to Action-oriented, Plurilingual and Intercultural Education**

CEFR - Companion volume (2020)

CEFR Descriptors (Searchable)

CEFR (2001)

CEFR Expert Group (2023). *A guide to action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education.*
Strasbourg: Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/1680af9496

A Guide to Action-oriented, Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

enrica.piccardo@utoronto.ca