



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

MEDIATION: What it is, how to teach it and how to assess it.

Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT and Education series
April 2022

CONTENTS

2	Introduction
4	What is <i>mediation</i> ?
7	Teaching mediation skills
8	Mediation and Cambridge English courses
13	Combining mediation with life competencies
15	Assessing mediation skills in the classroom
18	Mediation and Cambridge English assessment products
20	Further reading and watching

Introduction

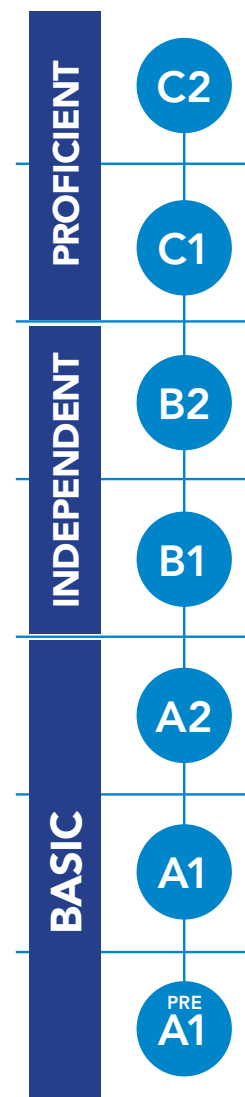
The importance of the CEFR

Since its first publication in 2001, the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) has been the go-to reference point for language learning, teaching and assessment. More recently, its 2020 “Companion Volume” updated and extended the original document.

It is an international standard that is used not only in Europe but beyond to show how learners are progressing in learning any language – not only English. If you know anything about the CEFR, you are likely to be familiar with its reference **level** framework. This is where learners can be placed according to their proficiency in a given language, starting at Pre-A1 for those just beginning their language learning journey, then on to A1 and A2 for basic proficiency; B1 and B2 for intermediate proficiency; and C1 and C2 for those highly proficient. This system helps learners see their **progression**, rather than simply say that they ‘can’ or ‘cannot’ speak a language. It means that language courses and examination providers can target their products to a particular group of learners according to their ability.

The level framework therefore also allows for the comparison of different *learners*, as well as comparing ability levels of different *languages* for the same learner. By extension, it is also possible to compare ability levels of different *skills* within the same language (e.g. speaking and writing); or in different *contexts* (e.g. in a social or an academic context).

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)



Categorising language according to the CEFR

The CEFR illustrates what is meant by the levels Pre-A1 to C2 by including a large number of *can-do descriptors*, which seek to describe what a language learner *can* do at a particular level. Its focus is therefore on the positive – on what a language learner is able to demonstrate when actually *using* the language in *real life* – **communication** is therefore key. The CEFR calls it an “action-oriented approach”.

Traditionally, language is separated into the four skills: *reading, writing, listening* and *speaking*, plus language functions such as grammar and vocabulary. While recognising the importance and widespread use of this categorisation, the CEFR – especially in its recent Companion Volume – categorises language in a slightly different way, which is arguably more useful and authentic of real-life communication.

Communication is made using *linguistic competence*: the building blocks of a language (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, orthography, etc.). It also requires *sociolinguistic awareness* and *pragmatic competences* such as fluency, coherence, the ability to take turns, etc. It may even require awareness of other cultures. But these elements need to be placed in a language *activity* carried out in order to communicate.

Language activities (as well as strategies to support these language activities) are categorised by the CEFR Companion Volume in these four ways:

Reception	These are language activities we do when we <i>receive</i> language. Usually this is by reading, listening or watching.
Production	These are language activities we do when we <i>produce</i> language. Usually this is by speaking or writing. Signing (in sign languages) is also a form of language production.
Interaction	Often reception and production activities are mixed together. Conversation – where one person speaks, and the other listens, cognitively processes, and then responds in speech – is a clear example of this. Other examples include reading and responding to an email or posting a message on social media. Note that the <i>social</i> and <i>cognitive</i> processes are also essential for communication.
Mediation	Unlike interaction, where <i>new</i> content is created in response to something that has just been heard, read or seen, mediation is often about taking the <i>same</i> content and rephrasing it to suit a different <i>context</i> . This paper focuses on mediation.



What is *mediation*?

The CEFR describes mediation as follows: “When a learner/user acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning”. It describes the actions of those who help when, for some reason, there is a communication gap which needs to be filled, and the same (or similar) content is conveyed using different language (not necessarily just one different language), in order to bridge that gap.

The most obvious example of such a gap is when two speakers who do not know each other’s language require a third language, or a translator, to mediate their message. The CEFR pays particular attention to this *cross-linguistic mediation* – but in informal settings, as is most likely to happen in real life, rather than the formal job of a translator or interpreter.

Communication gaps can also exist between varieties of a language (for example, different dialects) or between registers of language (such as the differences between formal and informal language, and all shades in between). Furthermore, mediation needs to happen when communication gaps are caused by social or cultural differences, or through a breakdown in communication caused by a disagreement.

Mediation can also occur between the skills needed in language input and output: for example in a lecture, a student might *listen* to a lecturer *speaking*, *write* down notes to be *read* later. In this example, the same content is transferred across all four skills. The language that is used each time may be different, relevant to the context, but the ideas and content remain more or less the same. The notion of *integrated skills* comes into mediation.

Mediation therefore covers the emotional, cognitive, social and cultural intelligence we need to use language in many different real-world contexts, and to help our understanding further, the CEFR sets out a number of different *can do* descriptors, at the different levels from Pre-A1 up to C2. It categorises the descriptors into different scales. In many of the scales, the descriptors can be used to talk about a language activity happening within one language (English, for example) or across more than one language (English to Spanish, for example).

If we believe in helping learners practice language that is actually useful in real-world contexts, we need to make sure that all four modes of communication, including mediation, are explored, practised and used in (and outside of) lessons. The ability to mediate language is essential in many real-world contexts, especially in academic contexts. The CEFR Companion Volume adds this paragraph on the importance of teaching mediation skills:

“The mediation descriptors are particularly relevant for the classroom in connection with small group, collaborative tasks. The tasks can be organised in such a way that learners have to share different inputs, explaining their information and working together in order to achieve a goal. They are even more relevant when this is undertaken in a CLIL context”

CEFR Companion Volume (2020), p.36

CEFR scales on mediation

The CEFR scales about mediation are summarised here. If you want to read about it in detail, you can look at the relevant pages of the CEFR Companion Volume, which is freely available to download online: [CEFR Companion Volume](#)

<p>Mediating a text (page 92): when someone takes a text, heard or read, and reformulates it in order to improve understanding, usually by speaking or writing. Therefore, the integration of two or more of the traditional four skills is needed.</p>	<p><i>Relaying specific information (p.93):</i></p>	<p>the ability to take specific information (e.g. instructions, directions or the main points of a text) and tell or write them to somebody else.</p>
	<p><i>Explaining data (p.96):</i></p>	<p>the ability to describe, present, comment or interpret graphically represented data (e.g. a bar chart), either in speech or writing.</p>
	<p><i>Processing text (p.98):</i></p>	<p>the ability to summarise, in speech or writing.</p>
	<p><i>Translating a written text (p.102):</i></p>	<p>translation may not necessarily be accurate, formal translation. Translation may occur informally or spontaneously, and approximate translations are sometimes appropriate.</p>
	<p><i>Note-taking (p.105):</i></p>	<p>a useful skill for study and work, in lectures, seminars and meetings.</p>
	<p><i>Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature) (p.106):</i></p>	<p>the ability to read and react to literature.</p>
	<p><i>Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature) (p.107):</i></p>	<p>the ability to compare and critically evaluate pieces of literature.</p>
<p>Mediating concepts (p.108): when someone creates the conditions for effective sharing of ideas in a group.</p>	<p><i>Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers (p.109):</i></p>	<p>collaborating in a group and inviting members of that group to share.</p>
	<p><i>Collaborating to construct meaning (p.109):</i></p>	<p>collaborating in a group and effectively developing the ideas, problems, actions, etc. that emerge from the group.</p>
	<p><i>Managing interaction (p.112):</i></p>	<p>leading, monitoring and facilitating communication in a group.</p>
	<p><i>Encouraging conceptual talk (p.112):</i></p>	<p>this could be, for example, asking questions to build contributions in a group into logical discourse.</p>
<p>Mediating communication (p.114): when someone is able to bring people together in communication, when there is a gap due to social and/or cultural reasons.</p>	<p><i>Facilitating pluricultural space (p.114):</i></p>	<p>being culturally sensitive in communication.</p>
	<p><i>Acting as an intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues) (p.115):</i></p>	<p>being able to relay information in informal situations, being aware of social and cultural differences.</p>
	<p><i>Facilitating communication in delicate situations and agreements (p.116):</i></p>	<p>being able to understand disagreements between parties and negotiate a resolution.</p>



As well as these mediation activities, the CEFR also contains some mediation strategies:

Strategies to explain a new concept (p.118)	<i>Linking to previous knowledge (p.118):</i>	encouraging others to activate prior knowledge.
	<i>Adapting language (p.118):</i>	paraphrasing and explaining.
	<i>Breaking down complicated information (p.118):</i>	clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points.
Strategies to simplify a text (p.121)	<i>Amplifying a dense text (p.121):</i>	enabling understanding of a complex text by paraphrasing, modifying style or giving examples.
	<i>Streamlining a text (p.121):</i>	enabling understanding of a complex text by highlighting relevant points and excluding irrelevant points.

Teaching mediation skills

If you already encourage real-life communication in your lessons, then you are probably already teaching mediation skills. To develop these skills further, you can look at the CEFR mediation descriptors, identify activities relevant to each CEFR level and adapt these to suit the context of your learners.

As cross-linguistic mediation is a form of real-life language that the CEFR describes, do not be afraid to allow the L1 in your classroom for authentic tasks of this nature. This could be reading information from a website and then conveying the information in the L1, or watching a non-dubbed film and discussing it as a group in L1.

The CEFR also describes different domains for mediation – personal, public, occupational and academic – which can provide more ideas for activities. Here are some examples:

Can convey information given in clear, well-structured information texts on subjects that are familiar or of personal or current interest (B1)

Students skim-read tourist information literature for a town or city, then ask their classmates about their interests so they can select some relevant activities for a day trip. Students can mix languages – reading English leaflets or websites and then talk about them in their own language, or vice versa.

Can summarise the important points made in longer, complex, live spoken texts on subjects of current interest (C1)

Students watch an English-speaking news website video and then summarise it, either in English or their own language, possibly adding their own opinions. Although this may also demand critical thinking skills, the emphasis is firmly on the learner as a mediator of information rather than an expert, which echoes real life.

As shown here, the CEFR also encourages teachers to develop students' own mediation strategies, such as getting people to talk by asking questions, or adapting their language to the person they are talking to. This means knowing the difference between informal and formal language, and how to grade language, for example how to make complicated information easy to understand, and how to identify the most important information. Teachers use these skills all the time, so draw on your own experience in order to devise activities which reflect the CEFR descriptors. For example:

Can explain technical topics within his/her field, using suitably non-technical language for a listener who does not have specialist knowledge (B2)

Students simplify key terms used in their own profession so that non-specialists can understand them.

Can identify and mark (e.g. underline, highlight, etc.) the key sentences in a short, everyday text (A2)

Students can do this in a reading passage, and explain how they knew what was a key sentence.

Mediation and Cambridge English courses

The Cambridge English Curriculum (CEC) framework is used to create our courses and products and makes the CEFR can-do statements more concrete for English language learners. The CEC therefore includes mediation, and it is

no surprise to find that Cambridge English courses already contain tasks aimed at teaching and developing mediation skills in English language learners. The following show some examples from courses for different age groups.



PRIMARY

EXERCISE	MEDIATION SCALE	MEDIATION DESCRIPTOR	CEFR LEVEL
16	Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers	Can invite others' contributions to very simple tasks using short, simple phrases prepared in advance. Can indicate that they understand and ask whether others understand.	A1

15  **Stella's phonics** 



Six busy insects.



A smiling crocodile.



It's easy to clean a smiling crocodile's teeth.



Sixteen teeth.

16 Make questions. Ask and answer.

Do you think Maths is exciting?

No, I don't.


Maths Art English difficult exciting easy

14

Find two people who ...		name 1	name 2
... think Maths is exciting	Do you think Maths is exciting?		
... think Art is easy	Do you think ?		
... think English is difficult	Do you ?		




SECONDARY

EXERCISE	MEDIATION SCALE	MEDIATION DESCRIPTOR	CEFR LEVEL
3	Note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.)	Can take notes as a list of key points during a straightforward lecture, provided the topic is familiar, and the lecture is both formulated in simple language and articulated clearly.	B1



THE ART AND DESIGN PROJECT

An advert storyboard

-  **1** Look at the pictures from an advert. What product does it advertise?
-  **2** Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and guess the dialogue for each one. Then listen and check.
-  **3** Listen again and complete the table with information about the features of the advert.

Advert features	Example
1 What's the problem?	<i>Katia has a backpack that isn't waterproof. When it rains everything gets wet.</i>
2 What's the solution?	
3 What are the special features of the product?	
4 Who are the characters in the story?	
5 What information does the narrator give?	
6 What's the slogan?	

How to give feedback

4 Feedback should be positive, motivating and useful. Complete the feedback phrases with the words in the box.

best how idea maybe positive work

The thing I liked ¹... was ...

Some ²... things were ...


I really liked ³... you ...

... is a great ⁴...


⁵... you could ...

... might ⁶... too.

A



C



106 ADVERTISING | UNIT 8

ADULT

EXERCISE	MEDIATION SCALE	MEDIATION DESCRIPTOR	CEFR LEVEL
3 & 4	Acting as an intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues)	Can communicate fluently the sense of what is said on a wide range of subjects of personal, academic and professional interest, conveying significant information clearly and concisely as well as explaining cultural references.	C1

3 GRAMMAR: Reported speech with modal verbs

A Read the sentences in the grammar box. Complete the rules.

Reported speech with modal verbs

Direct speech

"It **will be** delayed by about 30 minutes."
 "There **could be** an even longer wait."
 "You **won't have to** wait much longer."
 "I **can** make it."
 "I **might/may be** late."

Reported speech

They **estimated** (that) it **would be** delayed by about 30 minutes.
 They **announced** (that) there **could be** an even longer wait.
 They **said** (that) we **wouldn't have to** wait much longer.
 She ... **insisted** she **could** make it.
 I wish she'd **said** (that) she **might be** late.

In reported speech, change *will* to _____. Change *can* to _____ and *may* to _____.
 Other modals like *might*, *should*, and *could* don't change.

B **Now go to page 135. Look at the grammar chart and do the grammar exercise for 6.2.**

C **1.46 PAIR WORK** Listen to the messages and announcements and make notes. Take turns reporting them to each other. Then check your accuracy. When was the last time you heard similar messages? Do you remember what they said?



ACCURACY CHECK

Unlike most other verbs, use an object after *tell* in reported speech.

- He told that it wouldn't rain in June. X*
- He told me that it wouldn't rain in June. ✓*
- He said/swore/insisted that it wouldn't rain in June. ✓*

4 SPEAKING

A **PAIR WORK** Imagine you've heard some news items and you need to report them to someone who'll be affected by them. How will you deliver the news? Use the situations below and your own ideas.

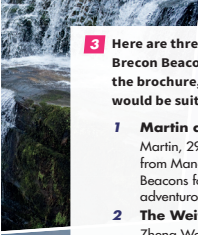
- City authority announcement: The new highway won't be ready for another two years because of costs, so your friend who commutes to work could be asked to use the longer route into the city.
- Soccer club newsletter: The star player of your friend's favorite soccer team has been injured, and the management may not be able to find a replacement in time for an important game.
- Real estate agent announcement: The construction of the apartment building where your friend bought an apartment has been delayed, they guess by about three years because the builders have discovered archaeological items on the site.

B **PAIR WORK THINK CRITICALLY** Think about the news items from exercise 4A. How can officials in charge manage people's expectations in these situations using strategies you discussed in exercise 1C on page 56?



EXAM PREPARATION

EXERCISE	MEDIATION SCALE	MEDIATION DESCRIPTOR	CEFR LEVEL
9	Adapting language	Can paraphrase more simply main points made in short straightforward (written) texts on familiar subjects to make the contents accessible for others.	B1




3 Here are three groups who would like to visit the Brecon Beacons. Using the ideas you underlined in the brochure, choose one or two attractions that would be suitable for each group.

- Martin and his friends**
Martin, 29, is about to get married, and is travelling from Manchester with seven male friends to the Brecon Beacons for the weekend. They are looking for some adventurous activities to do while they're there.
- The Weifeng family**
Zheng Weifeng is on holiday from China with his parents, his wife and their ten-year-old son. They love wildlife and would really like to see things which they can't see elsewhere.
- Shaun and Latifa**
One year after their wedding, English teachers Shaun and Latifa want to get away from it all and have a peaceful, romantic break in the countryside. They've chosen the Brecon Beacons because they have never been there before.

4 Sometimes you will read colloquial expressions in brochures. Find the words and phrases in the text that have a similar meaning to the words and phrases below.

- see something (often for a short period of time)
- a small number of
- from the more relaxed position of



5 Work with a partner and answer the questions.

- What is the man in the reddish-purple T-shirt doing?
- What is the other man doing? Why is this important?
- Have you ever been climbing before?
- What do climbers need to consider in order to climb safely? Write two DOs and two DON'Ts.

6 ⁰⁶⁸ Now listen to a member of staff at the Brecon Beacons Walls Climbing Centre, and write down the advice he gives for climbing safely. Which of your ideas in Exercise 5 does Jason talk about?

You should:
You shouldn't:

7 ⁰⁶⁹ Sometimes people use colloquial expressions when giving information about health and safety. Match the underlined phrases in sentences 1–5 to the correct meanings (A–E). Then listen to the first part of the listening again and check your answers.

PHRASES YOU MIGHT HEAR


- I'll be telling you about the basics of climbing safely.
- If you do see anything that doesn't look right, please let a member of staff know.
- We'd ask you to pay attention and help us keep the Wall Climbing Centre a safe place.
- Don't use any equipment yourself until you've checked that it's secure. It's better not to take risks even if it seems ok.
- That might seem like something you already know, but honestly, we've had people turn up in sandals or high-heeled shoes in the past.

A common sense
B keep your eyes open
C better to be safe than sorry
D taking you through
E spot

8 ⁰⁶⁸ Watch the video about the Brecon Beacons. What do you learn about these things? Make notes.

- The history of the Brecon Beacons
- Pen Y Fan
- The Brecon Beacons at night
- Water sports

WATCH



LIFE COMPETENCIES

UNDERSTANDING ISSUES, PARTICIPATING WITH CONFIDENCE

9 Work with a partner. Go online and research one other national park in the UK. Prepare a short presentation of what people can do there and some of the health and safety information that people would need to know. Then give your presentation to the rest of the class.

UNIT 10 TO THE LIMIT 143

Combining mediation with life competencies

Often referred to as '21st century skills', life competencies include the knowledge, skills and attitudes we need to participate effectively in the world around us, and to fulfil our potential – in our education, our careers and our lives in general. The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is a way of making sense of the different skills we want our students to develop, in addition to learning English.

The skills required for effective mediation are closely linked to many of the competencies in the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework (for more information see www.cambridge.org/clcf). Most areas of mediation will involve the *Communication* competency, but in addition to this, many of the other competencies in the framework can support the development of mediation skills. For example, **Mediating a text** will often involve an element of *Understanding and analysing ideas*, a core area of *Critical Thinking*. Likewise, *Encouraging effective group interaction*, a core area of *Collaboration*, is a key element of **Mediating concepts**.

The table overleaf shows some of the main links between mediation and life competencies. As mentioned above, most elements of mediation will also involve elements of the *Communication* life competency. These links between mediation and life competencies are useful to bear in mind when lesson planning or creating a scheme of work. For example, you may choose to develop both mediation skills and the relevant life competencies together in one lesson or series of lessons. The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework offers support in lesson planning for these competencies.



CEFR MEDIATION ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES	LIFE COMPETENCIES
MEDIATION ACTIVITIES	
Mediating a text	
Relaying specific information in speech / in writing	Critical Thinking
Explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts, etc.) in speech / in writing	Critical Thinking
Processing text in speech / in writing	Critical Thinking
Translating a written text in speech / in writing	Critical Thinking
Note taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.)	Critical Thinking
Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)	Creative Thinking
Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)	Critical Thinking
Mediating concepts	
Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers (part of <i>collaborating in a group</i>)	Collaboration
Collaborating to construct meaning (part of <i>collaborating in a group</i>)	Collaboration
Managing interaction (part of <i>leading group work</i>)	Collaboration
Encouraging conceptual talk (part of <i>leading group work</i>)	Collaboration
Mediating communication	
Facilitating pluricultural space	Social Responsibilities
Acting as an intermediary in informal situations	Critical Thinking
Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements	Collaboration
MEDIATION STRATEGIES	
Strategies to explain a new concept	
Linking to previous knowledge	Critical Thinking
Adapting language	Critical Thinking
Breaking down complicated information	Critical Thinking
Strategies to simplify a text	
Amplifying a dense text	Critical Thinking
Streamlining a text	Critical Thinking

Assessing mediation skills in the classroom

The CEFR descriptors can be used as a checklist in the classroom for formative assessment, to see what learners can do already and what the next steps in their progression should be.

Using the *CEFR scales on mediation* section above which describes the areas of mediation that the CEFR outlines, decide which are the most relevant for your learners. Some areas will be more relevant than others, and some areas will not be relevant at all. It is highly important to consider the actual needs of the learners you are responsible for. You might like to ask yourself the following questions to help you decide which areas of mediation you particularly want to focus on:

- Why are my learners learning English?
- What do they want to do with the language – either now, or in the future? (e.g. study at university? use it in a business context?)
- Are the needs different between different individuals in my class, or more or less the same?
- Which mediation activities are the most useful for them to know? (Why?)

- Will they need to do these activities in English only, or using another language as well? (e.g. read something in their home language, and talk about it in English)

Then, using the CEFR Companion Volume, find the mediation scale(s) you are interested in and look at the descriptors. You will see that not every level has descriptors: this is especially the case for lower levels as mediation activities tend to be more complex and thus suited to higher-level learners. You might have a rough idea of what level your learners are and therefore you might decide straight away that some levels are not relevant. You may also decide that some descriptors – even at the levels that your learners are at – are inappropriate to your learners' context and needs. You may decide that some descriptors will be appropriate if they are amended slightly. It is perfectly fine to change the descriptors in this way – in fact the authors of the CEFR actively encourage this!

As a result of this process, you will end up with revised descriptors which can form a checklist of how your learners should progress in this particular area of mediation, according to their context and needs. Your revised descriptors can also be used to inspire relevant activities to check whether a learner fulfils this descriptor yet or not.

Example 1

In this example, a teacher took the CEFR scale *Note-taking* (from p.105 of the Companion Volume) as it was felt that this would be particularly important for the learners who will need this skill in further education. Most learners were around B1 level and the teacher started by focusing on this level. The descriptors were amended to focus only on what was considered to be very relevant descriptors, and a classroom assessment activity was written:

LEVEL	REWRITTEN, RELEVANT DESCRIPTOR	SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY
B1	Can take simple notes as a list of key points, during a presentation about a topic recently covered in class, where the presenter speaks simply and clearly	Learners will watch a short video (approx. 3 minutes) on the topic we have recently covered in class. They need to write down the five key points that the presenter makes. Afterwards, I will ask the learners how they felt about the task, and whether they thought they achieved it successfully.

The teacher started with this B1 task, monitored the activity, and then marked each learner's performance according to whether the learner:

- had difficulty in achieving the task (and thus was probably below level B1, and would set an A2 level task)
- had some success in achieving the task, but not wholly satisfactorily (and thus was clearly at B1 level but would need some reinforcement at that level)
- achieved the task with ease (and thus was probably above level B1, and would set a B2 level task)

The teacher also obtained feedback from each learner themselves to get their perspective:

- *It was difficult for me to do this task.*
- *I was able to do this task but I'm not sure I did it right.*
- *I could do this task without too many problems.*

By using this information, the teacher was able to assess whether each learner was at B1 level, or above or below it. In the latter two cases, the teacher looked at the A2 and B2 descriptors, rewrote them to fit the context of the learners, and used these as learning objectives for the next class.

Example 2

Another teacher decided the *Encouraging conceptual talk* scale was particularly useful for the learners in the class. Although the learners' level of English was satisfactory, the ability to lead group work in this way varied amongst the learners, and the teacher wanted to make an initial assessment of what they could do across levels A1-B2. The teacher therefore set the learners up with a problem-solving activity, and devised a grid, based on the CEFR descriptors (on p.113), which could be marked with what the teacher heard in the discussion:

LEVEL	REWRITTEN, RELEVANT DESCRIPTOR	LEARNER 1	LEARNER 2	LEARNER 3	LEARNER 4	LEARNER 5	LEARNER 6
B2	Can take others' ideas and link them into their own ideas.		✓	✓			
B1	Asks others to explain why they think that way.			✓			✓
A2	Asks what someone else thinks of an idea.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A1	Uses simple words to show interest in an idea.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The teacher could then infer that the highest level achieved by each learner was their CEFR level for *Encouraging conceptual talk*. The teacher also noted that although Learner 2 did not display the B1 level descriptor, it would be likely that that learner could do that activity, but that the teacher would check in future to make sure.

Mediation and Cambridge

English assessment products

Mediation is part of the CEFR's action-oriented approach, which is all about communicative language teaching. Cambridge English exams have promoted communicative teaching and assessment for the last forty years, and they already include assessment of mediation skills. For example, paired speaking tests primarily focus on interaction but also

cover some mediation skills, such as interpreting pictures into a verbal description. In higher-level assessments, candidates may be asked to demonstrate mediation skills such as note-taking, or recognition of register. For example, this C2 Proficiency Writing task requires candidates to summarise and evaluate the key points from two texts.

Part 1

Read the two texts below.

Write an essay summarising and evaluating the key points from both texts. Use your own words throughout as far as possible, and include your own ideas in your answers.

Write your answer in **240 – 280 words on the separate answer sheet.**

1

Shifting sands: behavioural change

Nowadays, in some cultures there may often be confusion between generations about what is acceptable behaviour in certain situations. Older people sometimes complain, for example, about the real or imagined rudeness of others, such as in the use of electronic devices in public places. However, the younger generation do not regard electronic communication as intrusive, but rather as fundamental to their way of life. Only increased mutual understanding is likely to resolve potential conflict or confusion in any society. In this case, as in all others, it pays to be aware of other people's points of view.

Follow my leader?

Should we always aim to do what society expects of us? No, what society needs is individuality. Worrying about what other people think inhibits enthusiasm and creativity. Nothing new is ever achieved by conforming to expected social norms. This is not only true for society's innovators: everybody needs a strong sense of their own worth as an individual. This is essential for psychological well-being and the ability to function effectively in one's personal and professional life. Paying too much attention to society's conventions can be counter-productive in these and other ways.

Write your **essay**.

Technology may enable us to test mediation more effectively. A speaking task from Linguaskill, for example, asks the candidate to look at different modes of transportation before advising a friend on the best way to travel, using this information:

Your English-speaking friend needs to travel to a nearby city.

This table shows the different ways your friend could travel.

Leave a message for your friend, recommending a way to travel and explaining why you think this way to travel is best.

	By bus	By train	By taxi
Comfort	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★☆☆
Free WiFi	✓	✓	✗
Advantage	Nice views	Fast travel	Friendly drivers



Further reading and watching

- CEFR Companion Volume <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
- Cambridge Assessment webinar on mediation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0WBHggJhqY>
- Mediation in teaching, learning and assessment: A current ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) project which will provide a teaching guide on the issue: www.ecml.at/mediation
- Mediation: "A paradigm shift in language education". Presentation slides by Enrica Piccardo (co-author of the CEFR Companion Volume) <https://rm.coe.int/mediation-a-paradigm-shift-in-language-education-piccardo/16808ae720>
- Cross-Language Mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing (Maria Stathopoulou, Multilingual Matters, 2015)
- Developing illustrative descriptors of aspects of mediation for the CEFR (Brian North and Enrica Piccardo, Cambridge University Press).
- Cambridge Life Competencies Framework www.cambridge.org/clcf

A large, dark blue geometric shape, resembling a triangle or a trapezoid, is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page. It is set against a background of a lighter blue color.

cambridge.org/betterlearning