

Deconstructing communication skills: a competency framework for Foundation healthcare students using CEFR (2020) mediation skills.

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Outline

- Why use CEFR (2020) Mediation skills
- Context/Process
- CEFR (2020) Mediation skills
- Creation of Mediation competency framework
- Framework in use: self and peer assessment
- Using mediation descriptors for various tasks
- Usefulness of CEFR Mediation

Why use CEFR (2020) Mediation skills for deconstructing communication?

Mediation skills are special/useful for effective communication because

In mediation one is less concerned with one's own needs, ideas or expression than with those of the party or parties for whom one is mediating as a 'social agent' (Piccardo, North and Goodier, 2019) ie when conveying information. Hence, there is a heightened awareness of the other person in the interaction. So mediation includes skills such as *adapting language, intercultural awareness* and the use of **soft skills** such as *respect, sensitivity*.

And the CEFR (2020) Companion Volume has created Mediation descriptors for these vital (more holistic) skills of successful collaborative communication.

Mediation resonates with an action-oriented approach which emphasizes purposeful, collaborative tasks (Beacco et al, 2016)

Mediation combines language proficiency with transferable skills associated with professional knowledge and future employability (Pavlovskaya and Lankina, 2019)

Context/Process

Foundation stage university healthcare students' ESAP C1 communication needs identified



Patient:clinician roleplay communicative task



CEFR (2020) Mediation descriptors/skills chosen and adapted to create a mediation competency framework to meet communicative needs and task



Mediation competency framework used as a learning tool to formatively practise/assess communicative performance in roleplay task

Context and students' communication needs

17 international university Foundation Stage healthcare students (target level C1), 12 nationalities, 8 healthcare professions

Basic need: ability to understand and convey information *appropriately* in a pluricultural context (academically and professionally)

Patient:clinician roleplay task

- Action-oriented activity
- Relevant content: learner-generated research/sense of ownership, subject-specific patient case study (this was researched by the students)
- Range of skills which could meet students' *communicative needs* (ie using appropriate language, encouraging discussion, intercultural awareness/sensitivity)

Create mediation competency framework ← *communication needs*



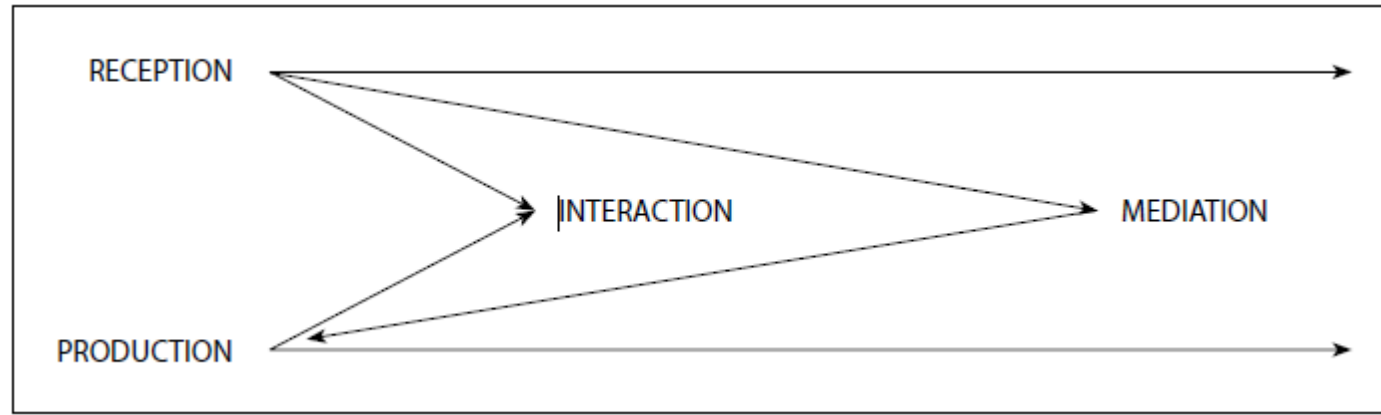
Common European Framework of Reference: [CEFR](#) (2020) Mediation skills



tend to reflect

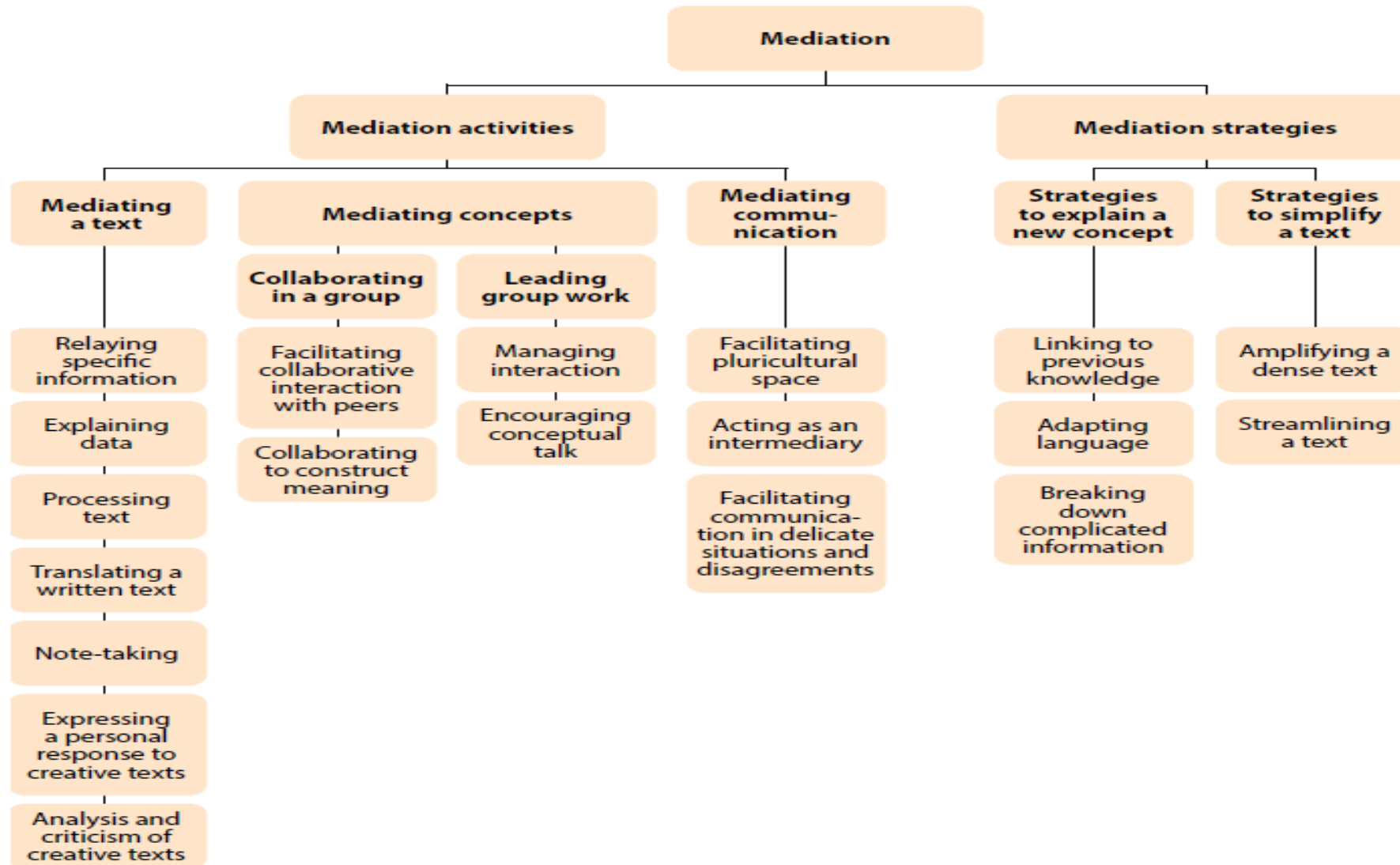
Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory
sociocultural competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980)
interactional competence (Kramsch, 1986; Hall, 1995)
functional competence – 'can do' (Savignon, 2002)

All modes of communication are activated in CEFR Mediation, where a source text/information is (re)formulated for another person (cognitive mediation)(academically ie presentation, professionally ie roleplay) to facilitate understanding and communication through mediation 'languageing' (relational mediation) (Piccardo, 2020; Coste and Cavalli, 2015).



The relationship between reception, production, interaction and mediation (CEFR, 2020:34)

CEFR Mediation skills (2020): a unique and useful interplay of micro skills to be integrated as in real-life communication



Mediation profiling: look up and down CEFR descriptors to find a profile, use descriptors vertically as well as horizontally (ie B2 mentions useful skills/ideas even for C1 learners = range of competences)

Overall Mediation descriptors for C1 and B2 (CEFR,2020)

C1	Can act effectively as a mediator, helping to maintain positive interaction by interpreting different perspectives, managing ambiguity, anticipating misunderstandings and intervening diplomatically in order to redirect the conversation. Can build on different contributions to a discussion, stimulating reasoning with a series of questions. Can convey clearly and fluently in well-structured language the significant ideas in long, complex texts, whether or not they relate to their own fields of interest, including evaluative aspects and most nuances.
B2	<p>Can establish a supportive environment for sharing ideas and facilitate discussion of delicate issues, showing appreciation of different perspectives, encouraging people to explore issues and adjusting sensitively the way they express things. Can build on others' ideas, making suggestions for ways forward. Can convey the main content of well-structured but long and propositionally complex texts on subjects within their fields of professional, academic and personal interest, clarifying the opinions and purposes of speakers/signers.</p> <p>Can work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds, creating a positive atmosphere by providing support, asking questions to identify common goals, comparing options for how to achieve them and explaining suggestions for what to do next. Can further develop others' ideas, pose questions that invite reactions from different perspectives and propose a solution or next steps. Can convey detailed information and arguments reliably, e.g. the significant point(s) contained in complex but well-structured texts within their fields of professional, academic and personal interest.</p>

Mediation skills	What you think (good, ok, find tricky/improve)	How you did (good, ok, find tricky/improve)
Processing text in speech		
Can clearly and confidently sequence, summarise, signpost information		
Can adjust use of language to ensure meaning is clear		
Can be understood clearly with appropriate use of pace/pauses, word and sentence stress, and tone of voice		
Explaining a new concept		
Can explain/check understanding of key points/complex details clearly and link to previous knowledge		
Collaborative interaction		
Can ask appropriate questions for clarification/demonstrate interest (also small talk/personalisation)		
Can elicit/encourage patient's ideas/concerns and use active listening, and appropriate turntaking, to allow patient to speak		
Can weigh up different points of view/possibilities using logical reasoning (hypothesising, analysing, inferring, justifying, predicting) + how agreement might be achieved		
Facilitating communication		
Can maintain positive/respectful interaction and anticipate problems in intercultural encounters		
Can demonstrate sensitivity and empathy to patient's perspectives		
Can establish a positive/supportive environment, also with use of appropriate body language		
A descriptor you would like to add		
Making decisions for future ie treatment plan, family support		

Framework in use

- 4 sections (Processing text in speech, Explaining a new concept, Collaborative interaction, Facilitating communication) to aid ease of use/reuse and recall
- The 10 competencies can be used flexibly/sense of ownership ie active listening and sensitivity can be used throughout the task
- New CEFR 2020 supporting scales also used ie for phonological control (intelligibility - Walker et al, 2021). Reference was also made to NHS values (ie respect, empathy), and Occupational English Test for healthcare (2018) - many similar skills to CEFR mediation skills.

Self (pre and post)and peer assessment using competency framework (Criterion-referenced: Good, OK, Improve)

Self assessment

Learners post-task felt they were better at soft skills included in *Facilitating communication* (inherent in healthcare students?)

....but poorer at *Collaborative interaction* skills such as turntaking, and adjusting use of language (ie awareness of others' understanding in the interaction)

Peer assessment

A peer rating index (PRI) determined a 60% agreement between students and teacher on individual's performance of each mediation skill. This illustrated an ability to mostly recognise the use of the mediation skills. Soft skills, adapting use of language and intelligibility received lower average PRI – skills hard to recognise/judge?

Example of student language in roleplay (some useful language can be fed in for learners with lower levels of language)

- *It's completely understandable to be worried. Whenever you're ready, can you please mention when this problem started to be seen and what were the first steps that you undertook.* Shows empathy, sensitivity, gives patient opportunity to speak

Good active listening – nods, yes, ok

- *Yes, I clearly understand. My question is if you might know what type of strabismo your child has as there are many types of it.* Checks patient previous knowledge
- *Thank you for informing me about the disease history and I also want to ensure that your son gets the best possible treatment so it was a good idea to make another consultation.* Confident
- *It is true what you say, there are many other treatment options, so surgery from my professional knowledge and skill should be the last alternative suggested for a 4 year old child.* Confidence and Weighs up different possibilities

Using mediation descriptors for other tasks

Presentations

Processing text in speech	Good	OK	Improve
Can clearly and confidently summarise, signpost information			
Can clearly interpret and explain data/details			
Can weigh up different points of view/possibilities using logical reasoning (hypothesising, analysing, justifying, predicting)			
Can be understood clearly with appropriate use of pace/pauses, word and sentence stress, and tone of voice			
Can answer questions clearly, sensitively and confidently			

Academic discussion task

Adapted Mediation descriptors from CEFR (2018)	What you think (good, ok, find difficult)	How you did (good, ok, improved)
Processing text in speech		
Can identify and summarise clearly key points		
Can interpret and describe clearly visual data		
Collaborative interaction with peers		
Can weigh up different points of view + how agreement might be achieved		
Can follow a line of argument		
Can ask questions for clarification/demonstrate interest		
Can ask questions to stimulate logical reasoning (hypothesising, analysing, inferring, justifying, predicting)		
Can make sure everyone is included, no one dominates, a collaborative/positive environment		
Facilitate pluricultural communication		
Can act as mediator in intercultural encounters, anticipate problems, maintain positive interaction		
Can demonstrate sensitivity to different perspectives, formulate any reservations/disagreements in such a way as to avoid offence		
Expressing a personal response		
Can express clearly reactions and emotions to a text + say why		

Tasks Mediation skills

Learners discuss which grammatical options could be correct, and why	Encouraging conceptual talk
Learners discuss what they might already know about a topic	Linking to previous knowledge
Learners sensitively discuss ie dress code or medical choices related to cultures	Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements
One learner explains information from a subject-specific text to another learner in language which other can understand	Adapting language Breaking down complicated information
Learners explain to each other how New Year is celebrated in their country	Relaying specific information
Group discussion task where learners have to decide upon one option	Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers

Usefulness of CEFR Mediation

- **Language for** describing behaviours and labelling, ongoing reference and feedback tool, 'Can do' is positive, goal-setting.
- **Shared/cooperative learning, co-constructing meaning:** Transfer/exchange of information is on various levels as in real-life, integrated skills and action-oriented view of language (ie skills in framework come to my mind when I conduct a 1:1 tutorial; can help managers ensure relationships in teams and with individuals are inclusive, positive, supportive and collaborative).
- **Transferability** of skills – academically and professionally, useful for 1st language speakers as not just linguistic skills. Use of **soft skills** – respect, empathy, sensitivity, **Adapting language** use (register, speed etc), **Critical thinking** skills – logical/analytical reasoning, weighing up possibilities (Bloom's taxonomy)
- Heightens awareness of **others' needs and cultures in communication** – helps make communication successful and charming 😊

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