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A Guide to Action-oriented, Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

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Foreword

This document is the outcome of a process of collective reflection on enhancing the effectiveness of plurilingual and intercultural education. This reflection has led to the development of the CEFR Companion Volume between 2014 and 2019 to extend and update the CEFR published in 2001. It is part of the Council of Europe's mission to promote quality and inclusive language education for all as an important aspect of education for democratic culture and mutual understanding. This process has been continued through case studies exploring the implementation of the new CEFR descriptors, and a series of conferences and workshops between 2018 and 2023 that aimed to facilitate understanding of the CEFR key concepts: action-orientation, mediation, and plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Both the conferences and workshops have demonstrated the relevance of these concepts to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion in today's classrooms, and they support innovation in teaching and learning practices.

As part of the process described above, in June 2023 the CEFR Expert Group (Evelyne Bérard, Daniela Fasoglio, Danielle Hunter, Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti, Brian North, Enrica Piccardo, and Bernd Rüschoff) animated a Reflection Day: *The CEFR Companion Volume: Enhancing engagement in language education,* the discussions at which inspired and informed the production of this guide.

The guide focuses mainly on the CEFR Companion Volume's role in enhancing engagement in language education. It is intended as a starting point for a continuing reflection on the centrality of action and agency in the language learning/teaching process, and on enhancing learner agency and engagement in plurilingual and intercultural language education.

CEFR Expert Group, 30 December 2023

A Guide to Action-oriented, Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

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1. Introduction

Action-oriented, plurilingual and inter/pluricultural education[1] seeks to promote inclusivity, social justice and quality language education for all. It fosters a holistic approach to language education, promoting coherence across the curriculum from the language of schooling to all other languages – home language(s), minority languages and additional languages. The ultimate goal is to encourage teachers and learners to value linguistic and cultural diversity as a source of educational enrichment and as an opening to the broad range of languages varieties and cultures across the globe. Plurilingual/pluricultural education is a major policy aim for the Council of Europe, one of the world's leading intergovernmental Human Rights organisations, which seeks to promote inclusive societies that provide quality education and social justice for all.

1.1. Action-oriented, agentive, plurilingual, and inter/pluricultural education

Action-orientation, social agency, plurilingualism/pluriculturalism and the concept of mediation were introduced to language education in the first edition of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*(CEFR), which appeared in preliminary versions in 1996 and 1998 before formal publication, after piloting, in 2001[2] by the Council of Europe. In the twenty years following the publication of the CEFR 2001, theoretical developments, grassroots experimentation by teachers and researchers in many countries – plus academic discussions and debates – have taken further these crucial educational concepts. This further development happened in a period in which changes in society were brought about by increased migration and mobility. These social transformations made these concepts – together with the transparency and coherence that the CEFR has always sought to promote – increasingly relevant to the provision of inclusive, quality language education that would engage and motivate students and contribute to (a) the valorisation of plurilingual repertoires; (b) the effective learning of additional languages; and (c) increased interculturality and mutual understanding in an ever-changing and more complex world.

Not everybody perceived the transformative potential of the new concepts introduced by the CEFR 2001, particularly the distinctive characteristics of the action-oriented approach and of plurilingualism. Some considered that the action-oriented approach was just the same as the communicative approach developed in the 1970s, or conflated plurilingualism with multilingualism. Above all, there was a tendency to consider that the CEFR was just concerned with the definition and assessment of second/foreign language proficiency levels in tests and examinations, disregarding its main aim, which is to encourage – for language education as a whole – curricula, teaching and assessment in a constructive

[1] In this document we use the terms pluricultural and intercultural interchangeably. The term 'pluricultural competence' is promoted by the CEFR alongside plurilingual competence, but the term appearing in other Language Policy documents is usually 'plurilingual and intercultural education.'

[2] Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available in 40 language editions: www.coe.int/lang-cefr

alignment that respects and promotes users/learners *agency*. In addition, the rather dense form that the CEFR 2001 took seems to have hindered the appreciation of the implications of its concept of the social agent and the vision for action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education that it proposes.

1.2. The CEFR Companion Volume

For these reasons a new updated and extended edition of the CEFR was produced in provisional versions in 2017 and 2018, piloted in 2017-2019 and published in 2020 (in the English version) as the *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume* (CEFRCV).[3] The CEFRCV explicitly explains the CEFR vision and key concepts in a short, illustrated text (CEFRCV Chapter 2). The title of the CEFRCV launch conference, held in May 2018, was: *"Building Inclusive Societies through Enriching Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education at a Grassroots Level: The Role of the CEFR Companion Volume."*

It is important to emphasise that the CEFRCV is for all practical purposes the second edition of the CEFR in what has always been stated to be an open-ended project. This is expressed as follows in the introduction:

> With this new, user-friendly version, the Council of Europe responds to the many comments that the 2001 edition was a very complex document that many language professionals found difficult to access. […]
>
> The updated and extended version of the CEFR illustrative descriptors contained in this publication replaces the 2001 version of them.[4] (CEFRCV, p. 21)

The new edition of the descriptors addresses 2001 translation errors, removes the expression 'native speaker,'[5] replaces the 2001 Phonology scale, is inclusive to sign languages and is (in English) gender neutral – as well as being extended to include scales for various aspects of mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and signing competence. The CEFRCV was recognized as the extended and updated edition of the CEFR 2001 by the different members of the Council of Europe who engaged in an ongoing process of translation resulting in the publication of the CEFRCV in 13 languages at the time of writing.

The development of the CEFRCV (2014-2019) overlapped with that of the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) (See Section 2.2.1) and was influenced both by early drafts of the RFCDC and by the sources it used; in turn the development of the RFCDC was influenced by the methodology used in developing the

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[3] Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching assessment – Companion Volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available so far in 13 language editions: www.coe.int/lang-cefr

[4] CEFR Table 1: the "Global scale" of levels remains unchanged in the new edition.

[5] The CEFR never took the 'native speaker' as a goal; it "is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence. What is intended is to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners ." (CEFR 2001, Section 3.6, p. 36). In fact the term 'native speaker' occurred only 13 times in descriptors, always in relation to the accommodation (or not) of a 'native speaker' to the fact their interlocutor was a learner. The term now is replaced by 'proficient speaker.'

CEFRCV descriptors.[6] The CEFRCV broadens the scope of both the CEFR and language education through its conceptualisation and operationalisation in descriptors of mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural competence, and sign languages, and thus promotes an inclusive, intercultural and plurilingual education for democracy, social justice and human rights by:

- fostering linguistic diversity both by integrating home languages in the class and by expanding the number of languages taught beyond English;
- aligning with the *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights* and the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC), about which more is said in Chapter 2 below;
- enabling the pursuit of the Council of Europe's goals in the field of language policies and education (Recommendation *The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture* (Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1;
- supporting and enhancing quality language education through the action-oriented approach and the development of digital literacy through in-person, blended, and online teaching.

In addition to the ongoing engagement with CEFR key concepts in many contexts, since 2018, a growing body of language professionals both within and beyond Europe have been experimenting with and exploiting the CEFRCV in implementing aspects of action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education.[7] They have been supported in this process by conferences offered by the Council of Europe in 2018 and 2020 and by a series of online workshops offered in 2021-2023.[8] All the presentations and materials from these events, plus a wealth of videos, articles and other resources are available on the updated CEFR website.

Towards the end of this process of introducing the CEFRCV, a Reflection Day entitled *CEFR Companion Volume: Enhancing engagement in language education* was held online in June 2023 with 40 experts engaged in the introduction of the CEFRCV in their contexts in relation to language policy, curriculum development, teacher education, and research. The meeting considered four main themes: (a) the way the CEFR can facilitate curriculum design for action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education; (b) the way action-orientation, mediation and plurilingualism interrelate and align with recent developments in language education; (c) the way the CEFRCV supports (digitally-mediated) collaborative learning environments; and (d) common misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the CEFR. A full Report is available online in English and French, but the main transversal points that came out of the discussions could be summarized as follows:

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[6] North, B., & Piccardo, E. (2016). *Developing illustrative descriptors of aspects of mediation for the CEFR.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[7] See, for example, the set of case studies published as *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion volume in practice*

[8] The materials from all these events can be found under the tab 'News/Events' on the CEFR website www.coe.int/lang-cefr. The website also contains a wealth of resources to assist understanding of the CEFR key concepts and ideas for implementation.

- The CEFRCV is seen as a solid and coherent framework that can be used to leverage curriculum reform and to facilitate a shift towards a more agentic, plurilingual, action-oriented education.

- The CEFRCV greatly contributes to laying out core concepts (mediation, plurilingualism / pluriculturalism and action-orientation) in a comprehensive and accessible manner, even though examples, training and the possibility of localizing and exchanging resources remain key and require further attention.

- The CEFCV has anticipated the digital transformation that is being witnessed in classes (and increasingly so after COVID) while stressing the need for a social-agency-oriented language education. Providing digital communication descriptors has facilitated the shift to integrate digital learning and agency in the class.

- The CEFRCV has foregrounded several concepts that align with human rights and with the focus of studies on decolonialization in language education. The overall philosophy of the CEFRCV is coherent with other frameworks developed by the Council of Europe, in particular the RFCDC, and the CEFRCV contributes to operationalizing concepts such as citizenship for democracy through plurilingual / pluricultural perspectives and approaches.

1.3. Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2022)1

In February 2022, the Council of Europe's Council of Ministers passed a recommendation *The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture* which, very briefly summarised, calls on public authorities, educational institutions and relevant associations to:

- encourage whole-school and higher education policies and practices that welcome and valorise linguistic and cultural diversity, promote language learning and the development of plurilingual repertoires, encourage intercultural learning and prepare students to participate in the democratic culture and processes of Europe's diverse societies;

- foster inclusive plurilingual and intercultural education in initial and further teacher education, formal and informal/lifelong learning, academic research, and quality assurance procedures associated with them;

- support collaboration between educational and cultural institutions, civil society and businesses to promote plurilingual and intercultural learning for democratic culture;

- encourage public discussion about languages and cultures, language learning and plurilingualism, and their importance for personal and professional development, quality education, societal integration and access to human rights and democracy.

The fundamental aim of the Recommendation is that member states should request and encourage institutions and stakeholders to: welcome and valorise linguistic and cultural diversity; promote language learning and the development of plurilingual repertoires; focus on pedagogies that foster inclusive plurilingual and intercultural education across the

curriculum; and prepare pupils and students to participate in the democratic processes of Europe's diverse societies.

The way the document explains its rationale is as follows:

> This recommendation addresses two developments of concern to the Council of Europe. The first is a tendency on the part of public authorities and civil society to think that proficiency in one additional language is enough as long as that language is English. The other is the populist notion that proficiency in minority or migrant languages, widespread in today's increasingly diverse societies, is harmful to societal cohesion. By successfully combining plurilingualism as an educational goal and plurilingualism as a societal reality and by fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding, plurilingual and intercultural education seeks to transform linguistic and cultural diversity into educational and social capital. (2022, p. 18)

The Recommendation brings together the various strands of the Council of Europe's concern with language education that have been outlined above. It shows particular alignment with the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC); the 2007 policy document *From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*; the *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume*; and the ECML's *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* (FREPA/CARAP).

This current document seeks to (a) clarify some of the issues at stake in achieving change in language education along the lines suggested by the CEFRCV; (b) encourage collaboration among stakeholders in order to meet the aims of the Recommendation; and (c) contribute to the abovementioned public discussion about languages and cultures, language learning and plurilingualism, as well as their importance for personal and professional development, quality education, societal integration and to advance human rights and democracy.

2. Action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education in the context of the mission of the Council of Europe

As the institution which is the home of the European Court of Human Rights, the primary concerns of the Council of Europe are human rights – including language rights and the rights of minorities and immigrants – democracy, and the rule of law. The Council of Europe, which currently has 46 member states, was founded by the Treaty of London between 10 states in 1949, soon after the end of the Second World War, with the aim of improving international understanding and preventing another war in Europe. One of the first acts of the member states was to sign the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. This convention was followed in 1954 by the European Cultural Convention, under which member states undertook to learn each other's languages, with the aim of developing mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity. The Council of Europe is distinct from the 27-member European Union, which grew from the European Coal and Steel Community founded in 1951, and is an institution with a political and economic focus.

2.1. The work of the Council of Europe in the field of language learning: 1964-2017

The Council of Europe's involvement in the language field started some 10 years after the 1954 European Cultural Convention with the 1964-1974 'Major project: Modern Languages,' which saw the birth of the Association internationale de linguistique appliqué (AILA).[9]

2.1.1. The Threshold Level and a unit credit scheme

This project included an intergovernmental Symposium entitled '*The Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education*' held at Rüschlikon, near Zurich in Switzerland in 1971, at which two significant ideas emerged: a notional/functional approach to the organisation of teaching content (rather than grammar or situations), and (b) a European unit-credit scheme for modern languages (the forerunner of the CEFR). A small working party, set up as a result to examine feasibility, produced *The Threshold Level*[10] (1975), a notional/functionally organized specification of what language competence someone would need to live in a foreign country, quickly followed by *Un Niveau-Seuil*[11] (1976) for French, a version of both documents for schools, and *Waystage* (the specification of a stepping stone halfway to Threshold).

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[9] For a more detailed account of this history, *see* *Modern languages in the Council of Europe 1954-1997*, by J.L.M. Trim.

[10] van Ek, J. A. (1975). *The Threshold Level in a European Unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
van Ek, J. A & Trim, J. L. M. (1998). *Threshold 1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Revised edition.

[11] Coste D., Courtillon J., Ferenczi V., Martins-Baltar M., & Papo E. (1976). Un niveau-seuil. Paris: Hatier.

The Threshold Level, with its shift of attention from form to function, was very well received by the field and largely sparked the communicative approach, which quickly led to little less than a revolution in curricula, textbooks and examinations for English. As a result, versions of Threshold for some thirty national and regional languages were produced in the following years. *The Threshold Level* was later to become the basis for CEFR B1 and Waystage for CEFR A2.[12]

At this point, in a demonstration of the central concern for social justice of the Council of Europe, the Council of Ministers adopted Recommendation 814 (1977), which included the:

> call on the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe to develop the teaching of modern languages, taking account of:
>
> i) the particular needs of the less privileged groups, particularly migrants;
>
> ii) the need to diversify the languages taught;
>
> iii) the cultural advantages of maintaining language minorities in Europe;
>
> iv) the pedagogical aspects of language learning.

2.1.2. Communicative language teaching

In its next major initiative, the project: '*Learning and teaching modern languages for communication*' during the 1980s, the Council of Europe organised several cycles of workshops to introduce different aspects of the communicative approach to the lower secondary school sector in member states. These workshops were extremely popular, built up a network of language professionals across Europe, and led to the founding in Graz of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) as a partial agreement of the Council of Europe in 1994 to continue this process. Between 1984 and 1987, the Council of Europe also held a series of 37 international workshops for teacher trainers in 15 countries and attended by approximately 1,500 participants. At the same time in the 1980s, with the initiative 'Schools Interaction Network', small teams of individuals who were engaged in innovative projects visited other member states for discussions with schools and curriculum developers. There are parallels between this initiative and the current ECML's Training and Consultancy offer, which sends small teams of experts to member states.

2.1.3. A common framework

Following the recommendations of two intergovernmental symposia: *Language learning in Europe: the challenge of diversity*, and *Language learning and teaching methodology for citizenship in a multicultural Europe*, held in Strasbourg in 1988 and in Sintra in 1989 respectively, the Council of Europe launched a new 1990-1997 project: *Language learning for European citizenship*. This project set up a series of paired workshops on the same subject, with one member state offering the first and another the second. However, the Swiss government proposed that the time was ripe – after the fall of the Berlin wall and the accession of many new member states – to consider again the idea of developing a common Framework for the whole of Europe.

[12] Although the Symposium delegates recommended the development of the unit-credit scheme, it did not come to fruition since France and Germany decided the time was not ripe.

As a result, a second Rüschlikon symposium, *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, assessment and certification*, held in 1991, recommended the development of both a Common European Framework and a European Language Portfolio (ELP). A Swiss National Science Programme project (1993-1997)[13] was set up to develop categories and descriptors for the Framework, with the draft presented at a conference in Strasbourg in 1997, before trialling, feedback and revision. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) was published in its final version in 2001 in English and French. Translated into 40 languages and adopted as a reference by almost all countries in Europe and many beyond, a 2006 survey of member states suggested that the CEFR 2001 had by then already become possibly the most influential publication in language education in Europe.

Right from the beginning, the CEFR was conceived with two broad aims: (a) to provide a common metalanguage with a set of defined common reference points (levels) to aid professional networking and mutual recognition; and (b) to be a stimulus for educational reform towards action-orientation and enhanced student agency.

The first aim (alignment) can be considered to have been largely attained.[14] In fact, descriptors from several CEFR-based instruments fed into the updating and extending of the descriptors for the second edition published in the CEFRCV. The CEFR has succeeded in harmonizing the way levels and progression are conceived for different languages and in describing what users/learners at different levels are able to do in a language. This by itself has been a significant factor in improving language education, since it has (a) enabled different stakeholders to use a common metalanguage for describing proficiency and thus facilitated networking, including across educational sectors and borders; and (b) encouraged more realistic and appropriate objectives and tasks in curricula and course books as well as in assessment.

Therefore, it is in relation to the second of the CEFR's aims, i.e., the potential of the CEFR vision for educational reform (promoting plurilingualism, action-orientation and learner agency), that the CEFR is especially relevant to the current discussion. In fact, as shown at the intergovernmental Forum held in 2007, it has long been clear that member states are very interested in this aspect.[15] Before discussing educational innovation in more detail in Chapter 3, we present in the following subsections the work undertaken by the Council of Europe in relation to key concepts and core areas which have contributed to collective reflection around language education.

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[13] Schneider, G., & North, B. (2000). *Fremdsprachen können: was heisst das? Skalen zur Beschreibung, Beurteilung und Selbsteinschätzung der fremdsprachlichen Kommunikationsfähigkeit.* Chur and Zürich: Rüegger.

[14] There remain issues with the way in which the levels have sometimes been interpreted – particularly that many international examinations for English have used different methods to claim alignment with the CEFR rather than following the procedures recommended for doing so.
See: Green, A. (2017). Linking tests of English for academic purposes to the CEFR: The score user's perspective, *Language Assessment Quarterly, 5*(1), 59-74.

[15] Council of Europe. (2007). *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities. Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum, Strasbourg, 6-8 February 2007, Report*, edited by F. Goullier. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

2.1.4. Plurilingualism

"Plurilingualism constitutes the underlying principle of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)."[16] The CEFR introduced the concept of plurilingualism to language education on the basis of studies of immigrants' use of language in France[17] and Switzerland.[18] Already in the early 1990s, there was considerable concern that the move to communicative language teaching had not contributed to maintaining and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. This was a main reason why the ELP was produced at the same time as the CEFR, in order to emphasize the need for learners and schools to highlight and value ability in *all* languages, including home languages, and not just those taught as school subjects.

Plurilingual competence was seen as one of the foundations of democratic culture, with a core policy document of the Council of Europe stating that: "[i]f we recognise the diversity of languages in our own repertoire and the diversity of their functions and value, this awareness of diversity that we carry within us will foster a positive perception of other people's languages. The promotion of plurilingualism is therefore one of the foundations of an education in linguistic tolerance viewed as a form of intercultural education."[19]

In the years that followed the publication of the CEFR, the focus of the involvement of the Council of Europe in language education shifted towards the promotion of plurilingual education. Plurilingual education was defined as fostering:

- an awareness of why and how one learns the languages one has chosen;
- an awareness of and the ability to use transversal skills in language education;
- a respect for the plurilingualism of others and the value of languages and varieties irrespective of their perceived status in society;
- a respect for the culture embodied in languages and for the cultural identities of others;
- an ability to perceive and mediate the relationships that exist among languages and cultures;
- a global, integrated approach to languages in the curriculum.[20]

Two significant policy papers were produced, which are still fully valid: the 2007 paper *From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*, and the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for*

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[16] Beacco, J. C. (2008). *The role of languages in policies for the integration of adult migrants*. Concept Paper prepared for the Seminar "The Linguistic integration of adult migrants." Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[17] Coste, D., & Hebrard, J. (Eds.) (1991). Vers le plurilinguisme? École et politique linguistique. *Le français dans le monde: recherches et applications* [thematic issue]. Paris: Hachette.

[18] Lüdi, G., & Py, B. (1984/2017). *Zweisprachig durch Migration. Einführung in die Erforschung der Mehrsprachigkeit am Beispiel zweier Zuwanderergruppen in Neuenburg (Schweiz)*. Tübingen: Niemeyer. Reprinted 2017: Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
Lüdi, G., & Py, B. (1986/2003). *Être bilingue.* Bern: Peter Lang.

[19] Council of Europe (2014). *Languages for democracy and social cohesion: Diversity, equity and quality - Sixty years of European co-operation*.

[20] Council of Europe (2006). *Plurilingual education in Europe: 50 years of international cooperation*.

plurilingual and intercultural education, which first appeared in 2010 before final publication in 2016. In addition, numerous ECML projects concern aspects of plurilingualism, particularly the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* (FREPA/CARAP). FREPA promotes and gives descriptors and example activities for pluralistic approaches (defined as didactic approaches which involve the use of more than one variety of languages or cultures simultaneously during the teaching process). FREPA has a sophisticated multi-layered system of hundreds of descriptors and sub-descriptors organised into different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The website contains a variety of didactic materials, each focused on a particular aspect, as well as a library of modules for teacher training. The FREPA publication (containing the descriptors) is available in 12 languages.

2.1.5. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has always been crucial in the Council of Europe's involvement in language education – and in the pluralistic approaches identified by FREPA. In the same 1990-1997 project that produced the CEFR, *Language learning for European citizenship*, the work of the Council of Europe in languages had begun to concern itself with broader issues linking language learning to education for democracy. This engagement led to one of the background studies for the CEFR, *Sociocultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching.*[21] This publication contained two parts. The first questioned the idea that the competence of an idealised 'native speaker' should be the goal of language education; it proposed as an alternative the intercultural speaker, capable of building bridges between cultures, and defining learning objectives to achieve this end, suggesting possible types of evaluation. The second study gave an overview of the nature of sociocultural competence and its role in language teaching and learning, drawing on theory and examples from curricula and textbooks. Unfortunately, the publication appeared after the Swiss research project, referred to above, had completed the development of CEFR descriptors. Furthermore, attempts to calibrate descriptors for sociocultural competence to levels in the Swiss project were unsuccessful, so no descriptors scale for sociocultural competence were included in the CEFR, even though several of the descriptors on the CEFR scale for *Sociolinguistic Appropriacy* have a strong sociocultural aspect to them.

The CEFR background study referred to above was followed soon after the publication of the CEFR by two policy papers on intercultural competence: *Intercultural Competence* and *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers*. These papers in turn were themselves followed up by several ECML projects, as well as by the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*, which then evolved into different versions for different age ranges and modalities (for face-to-face encounters and for encounters through visual media). The aim of the Autobiography is to help learners to negotiate contacts with unknown realities, stimulating curiosity and interpretative competences that are empathetic and critical. In discovering what underlies encounters that made a strong impression on them, learners reflect on their experience and their reactions to it, thereby deepening their intercultural competences.

[21] The English version was published as a book and is not available online. The French version can be downloaded here.

In the longer term, these studies on intercultural competence fed on the one hand into the work on competences for democratic citizenship (see Section 2.2.1. below) and, on the other hand, into the development of CEFRCV descriptors for *Building on pluricultural repertoire* and *Facilitating pluricultural space*.

2.1.6. The language of schooling

The developments that we have presented in relation to plurilingualism and intercultural competence highlighted the need to broaden the engagement of the Council of Europe in language education to consider the language dimension in education as a whole. After the success of the CEFR, which was intended primarily for the teaching of additional languages, another area of language education emerged. This development was the result of a change in the composition of classes due to increased international mobility, with the term 'language of schooling' replacing that of teaching the mother tongue. A series of seven intergovernmental conferences and four international seminars were held between 2004 and 2015. Very early in this series of meetings it was decided not to develop a common European framework like the CEFR for the language of schooling. Instead, a series of studies on different issues connected with the language of schooling were produced, for example:

- *Language and school subjects - Linguistic dimensions of knowledge building in school curricula*;
- *Languages of schooling: focusing on vulnerable learners*; and,
- *A handbook for curriculum development and teacher training. The language dimension in all subjects*.

These documents were accompanied by others on specific subject areas: history, sciences, literature, and mathematics. Examples of descriptors for the language of schooling were provided by Norway, the Czech Republic, Val d'Aosta (Italy), Portugal, Spain, Slovenia and Luxembourg in addition to adaptations of CEFR descriptors later produced in the ECML project *Language skills for successful subject learning. CEFR-linked descriptors for mathematics and history/civics (Language Descriptors).* All these materials, plus reports from all the conferences and seminars, other studies, and materials provided by member states, are available on the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education.*

As well as responding to the increasing recognition that all children need to learn the technical language in specific subjects, the work on the language of schooling has been particularly concerned with the development in the language of schooling of child migrants, particularly those children who arrive in the host community later in their school careers.

In the ECML's MARILLE project, which was a major input into the development of the Platform referred to above, a survey was conducted in 2009, which showed that, although participants themselves were positive about plurilingualism and considered that it was important for curricula and teaching practice to follow guidelines on plurilingualism:

> [p]lurilingualism in children is only seen as successful if they reach a monolingual level in all their languages [...] very often people think of plurilingual children as having deficits, because

> people only consider their competences in the majority language, which can sometimes be perceived as deficient

and concluded that:

> [e]ven in countries that have long experience of linguistically diverse classrooms, attitudes change slowly. It takes politicians a long time to acknowledge that the curriculum has to be adapted and that much more has to be done if "new" minority languages are to be an integral part of society. [...] Many teachers of the majority language are not ready to face a linguistically diverse classroom, because these changes have happened relatively quickly. The majority language is mostly taught as if it were the mother tongue of all learners in the class.[22]

The MARILLE project went on to propose the following aims/values for promoting a plurilingual approach in schools, based on projects in Austria:

- educate all pupils for a multilingual and multicultural society through developing enjoyment of and curiosity, respect and esteem for languages;
- increase motivation for learning languages and/or getting to know more about them;
- appreciate and enjoy different cultures, literatures and texts, different discourses, styles and genres;
- challenge and reject language discrimination among racialized individuals;
- inform parents about the benefits of developing their children's plurilingualism;
- recognise that plurilingualism concerns all learners and all subjects;
- be inclusive of learners with varying language skills, proficiency profiles and cultural backgrounds;
- benefit from all the language capacities learners possess;
- increase confidence, enjoyment and awareness in using various languages;
- support identities work;
- include student voice: learner autonomy and ownership of learning processes and outcomes.[23]

Further information that is relevant and that addresses the issues above is readily available through studies on the Platform, including:

- *The linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds*;
- *Capitalising on activating and developing plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires for better school integration*;
- *Migrant pupils and formal mastery of the language of schooling: Variations and representations*;

[22] Boeckmann, K. B., & Lasselsberger, A. (2012). *Promoting plurilingualism: Majority language in multilingual settings*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, p. 15

[23] Boeckmann, K. B., & Lasselsberger, A. (2012), p. 24.

- *Language diagnostics in multilingual settings with respect to continuous procedures as accompaniment of individualized learning and teaching*;
- *Cooperation, management and networking: Effective ways to promote the linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds*;
- *Professional development for staff working in multilingual schools*.

2.1.7. The linguistic integration of adult migrants (LIAM)

A related but separate field of endeavour concerns the teaching of the language of the local context to migrants. The *LIAM project*, launched in 2006, provides assistance to member states in developing and implementing coherent and effective policies in this area that align with the Council of Europe values and principles, as well as providing an online platform of pooled resources. In addition to guidelines like *Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants - Guide to policy development and implementation*, and official texts from recommendations and resolutions, the project website provides reports on conferences and the results of surveys (e.g., of requirements for residence and citizenship in member states).

The guide to policy development mentioned above states that programmes designed to support linguistic integration:

> "should implement the Council of Europe's core values. In particular they should take into account:
>
> (a) *the languages that adult migrants already know*: it is not a case of teaching these to migrants (since they already know them), but of recognising them and making space for them to:
>
> - help migrants learn a new language;
> - encourage adult migrants to appreciate the value of their mother tongue(s) because they need self-esteem to succeed;
> - encourage them to pass these languages on to their children (at least using them within the family), because the languages that these migrants bring with them enrich their receiving societies;
>
> (b) *the language needs of adult* migrants, which must be identified but also discussed with them;
>
> (c) *the diversity of migrant populations*, in response to which language programmes should be tailor-made, as appropriate as possible to particular situations of individual migrants. The learning programmes offered to or imposed upon many different groups risk being demotivating and ultimately ineffective if the migrant learners do not get from them what they were looking for. This effort to achieve quality shows respect for individuals, as it truly aims to integrate them successfully into the receiving society." (p. 12)

The LIAM project has increasingly focused on vulnerable groups, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, and for this reason has produced a practical Toolkit to help volunteer teachers, which is available in eight languages and comprises 57 tools and other resources. More recently, following a feasibility study carried out in late 2020, work has focused on resources that are also suitable for use with migrants between the ages of 11 and 18. This has led to the development of a new LSM (language support for migrants) Toolkit containing 80 tools launched in March 2024. This includes new tools and adaptations of

tools from the earlier Toolkit for volunteers working with adult refugees. It is accompanied by a Guide to key topics for training teachers and volunteers involved in LSM which is based on detailed exploration of certain resources in the LSM Toolkit.

In addition, the project organised a major international conference in 2016, with the proceedings published in the book *The linguistic integration of adult migrants. Some lessons from research/ L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes. Les enseignements de la recherche*.

2.2. Other recent developments

The broader engagement of the Council of Europe to consider the language dimension in education as a whole has been an ongoing process and has highlighted synergies between the Council of Europe's work in language education and its work in related educational areas. These synergies have informed a number of significant developments in the past decade (2014-2023), which we outline briefly below.

2.2.1. Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

Perhaps the most significant of these is the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC), which developed out of the work on intercultural competence and preparation for citizenship mentioned in Section 2.1.5 above. The RFCDC includes a model of the competences learners need in order to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully with others in culturally diverse democratic societies. It was unanimously approved by the standing conference of European ministers of education in 2016.

The RFCDC consists of three main resources: Volume 1 presents the model of 20 interrelated competences organized into four groups: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding; Volume 2 provides descriptors for the above-mentioned competences, organized in three levels (basic, intermediate, and advanced); and Volume 3 offers guidance for implementation in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher education, and governance/participation. There is also an associated Teacher self-reflection tool and a webpage with a Compendium of related resources.

The RFCDC has been disseminated through an international network entitled the Education Policy Advisors Network: (EPAN) in cooperation with the European Union, and has been implemented in projects in many countries of central and eastern Europe. It is also at the heart of the later initiatives of the Education Department, namely Digital Citizenship Education (DCE), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Competences for Democratic Culture in Vocational Education and Training, and guides the work of the programmes of the Department, including higher and further education, history education, and language policy and practice.

2.2.2. LASLLIAM

The *Reference Guide for Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants* (LASLLIAM) was launched in 2022. The Reference Guide aims to meet a

need to support the language-learning of non-literate and low-literate adult migrants.[24] It provides CEFR-based descriptors for four stages up to the A1 level. The Reference Guide can be used to foster and trace the linguistic development of non-literate and low-literate migrants, as well as to design and improve the learning environments offered to them. In addition to the bank of descriptors, the Reference Guide offers principles for teaching literacy and second language within this context, relevant aspects of curriculum design, and recommendations on the development of assessment procedures tools.

2.2.3. Roma, Sinti and Travellers

The current work of the Council of Europe in the field of minority languages and ethnic groups is focused on Roma, Sinti and Travellers. A series of projects, conducted in collaboration with the European Union, have contributed to promoting and protecting the rights of these minorities in Council of Europe member states and to fostering equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion by addressing discrimination.

In 2008 the Council of Europe published a *Curriculum Framework for Romani* and related resources as part of the organisation's comprehensive response to Roma and Traveller issues; in 2018–2019 an expert group drew up a set of *Policy Guidelines* on the role of the Romani language in the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents; and in 2022 the Council of Europe launched the *Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation*, a four-year project designed to test the policy proposals in practice.

2.2.4. Digital transformation in education

The Digital Transformation is one of the five programmes of the Council of Europe Education Department and focuses on two main strands of work: Digital citizenship education and Artificial Intelligence and education.

The **Digital Citizenship Education** (DCE) project presents a holistic approach that takes competences for democratic culture (RFCDC) as a basis and strives to develop the essential ***skills*** and ***knowledge*** needed in today's digitally connected world and foster the ***values*** and ***attitudes*** that will ensure they are used wisely and meaningfully. These d**igital citizenship competences** are addressed in 10 different domains of activity under three umbrellas: Being online**;** Well-being online**;** and Rights online.

The **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Education** project is committed to harnessing the **potential of AI systems to play a transformative role** in achieving accessible, inclusive, and equitable education for all guided by the principles of human rights, democracy, and inclusivity that define the Council of Europe's mission. In this domain, the Council of Europe is working on principles and guidelines that promote the ethical and responsible integration of AI technologies in diverse educational contexts, fostering an inclusive approach that respects cultural, linguistic, and social diversity. Recent resources include the following 2022 report: *Artificial Intelligence and Education: A critical view through the lens of human rights, democracy and the rule of law*.

[24] A 2020 survey carried out for the Council of Europe by ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) *Linguistic integration of adult migrants: requirements and learning opportunities* indicated that only around one third of member states currently provided courses addressing literacy issues.

3. Action-orientation, mediation and plurilingualism: The new vision of language education

The concepts of action-orientation, social agency, mediation, and plurilingualism were introduced to language education in the CEFR 2001, but – with the exception of plurilingualism – not elaborated or explained. As a result, the extent of the take up of these new concepts in the years following the publication of the CEFR was, for various reasons, limited. Most users of the CEFR interpreted it as a way of giving more rigour to the communicative approach and the main focus in the 2000s was on the use of the CEFR descriptors for the alignment of curricula and assessment to an external criterion, the CEFR scale of levels. The CEFRCV redresses the balance by putting the emphasis on the learning and teaching that are given prominence in the full title of the CEFR.

3.1. Developments in research relevant to language education

The CEFRCV takes account of developments in research in language education since the late 1990s when the CEFR 2001 was written. The main theoretical lenses that have recently supported research in language education are the following:

- Complexity theories, which posit that systems are embedded in one another in complex adaptive systems. Interactions between elements within a system as the system interacts with its environment lead to dynamic change and the emergence of a new state.[25]
- Sociocultural theory, which posits that all learning happens first in a social setting through a process of mediation and is only later internalised.[26]
- Enactivism, which goes beyond traditional dualisms like mind-body or cognition-emotion and considers all action from a holistic, situated perspective.[27]
- Phenomenology, which posits that we perceive affordances in the environment as invitations to action – but that we need agency to do so.[28]

[25] Larsen-Freeman, D., & Cameron, L. (2008). *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Larsen-Freeman, D., & Todeva, E. (2022). A sociocognitive theory for plurilingualism: Complex dynamic systems theory. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford, & G. Lawrence (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 209-224). London and New York: Routledge.

[26] Lantolf, J. P. & Poehner, M. (2014). *Sociocultural theory and the pedagogical imperative in L2 education: Vygotskian praxis and the research/practice divide*. New York: Routledge.

[27] Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (2017). *The embodied mind, revised edition: Cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge MA: MIT press.

[28] Käufer S., & Chemero A. (2015). *Phenomenology: An introduction.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Cognitive science, in which language is seen increasingly as a socially situated process ('languaging') rather than a static entity with an existence independently of its users[29] and/or as a complex adaptive system.[30]
- The development of the concepts of agency and mediation in different fields (linguistics/language education, cultural studies, sociology, psychology).
- Advances in language teaching methodologies, with an impact on practices, for example: in the definition of tasks for task-based learning;[31] in the theorization of the action-oriented approach;[32] and in new visions of assessment with learning-oriented assessment[33]and scenario-based assessment.[34]
- The shift toward situated, collaborative, problem-based learning,[35] as well as competence-based assessment,[36] in content areas, particularly in sciences.

All this research referred to above has in many cases further supported the very forward-looking concepts that the CEFR introduced and that are further developed in the CEFRCV.

3.1.1. A new vision of language

Language is increasingly seen as a complex system that is in constant transformation. This leads to the stratification of elements. There is no 'pure' language: languages merge into one another through peripheral dialects and borrow from each other all the time. Each language in both societies and individual repertoires is constantly changing through bottom-up mutations, which get recognized (or not) in successive editions of reference works that codify the socially-constructed 'standard' version of the language concerned at a

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[29] Raimondi, V. (2014). Social interaction, languaging and the operational conditions for the emergence of observing. *Frontiers in Psychology.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00899
Cuffari, E. C., Di Paolo, E., & De Jaegher, H. (2015). From participatory sense-making to language: there and back again. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 14*(4), 1089-1125.

[30] Ellis, N. C., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (2009). *Language as a complex adaptive system*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
de Bot, K. (2016). Multi-competence and dynamic/complex systems. In V. Cook & L. Wei (Eds.) *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic multi-competence* (pp. 125–141). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[31] van den Branden, K. (Ed.) (2006). *Task-based language education: From theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[32] Piccardo, E., & North, B. (2019). *The action-oriented approach: A dynamic vision of language education.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

[33] Learning-oriented assessment: The stages of the Learning-oriented assessment cycle (04.24 mins.) Cambridge Assessment.
Jones, N., Saville, N., & Salamoura, A. (2016). *Learning oriented assessment* (Studies in Language Testing, Vol. 45). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[34] Purpura, J. E. (2021). A rationale for using a scenario-based assessment to measure competency-based, situated second and foreign language proficiency. In M. Masperi, C. Cervini & Y. Bardière (Eds.), *Évaluation des acquisitions langagières : Du formatif au certificatif. MediAzioni, 32*, A54-A96. http://www.mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it.

[35] Brown, J.S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989) Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher* 18 (1), 32-42.
Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Masciotra, D., & Morel, D. (2011). *Apprendre par l'expérience active et située : la méthode ASCAR [Learning through Active Situated Experience: The ASCAR Method].* Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

[36] Wolf, A. (1995). *Competence-based assess*ment. Buckingham: Open University Press.

particular point in time. There has been a move away from the binary view that distinguished language as an entity from the way it is used, with Saussurre trying to theorise how *langue* is actualised in *parole*,[37] and the later distinction introduced by Chomsky between competence and performance,[38] in which competence is idealised and language use is seen as imperfect and deficient. Languages are thus no longer seen as fixed codes, as static entities separate from their users. Language is no longer considered as a tool to formulate the expression of symbolic thought that already exists in the mind. Rather, language is increasingly seen as contributing to the thinking process itself, helping to shape cognition in a dynamic circularity through an activity called 'languaging.' This vision sees both language and communication as flexible and situated, as constantly changing in a process of negotiation and co-construction of meaning.

The concept of languaging has developed in philosophy, linguistics, cognitive sciences and language education.[39] It has been described as a special kind of social agency.[40] In a natural development from pragmatics, the use of a verb form 'languaging' puts the social agent at the centre rather than a static linguistic system, underlines the role that language plays in thinking things through, either alone or with others, and moves the emphasis from the brain, the mind, to situated cognition in embodied action and social negotiation. In language education, the concept of languaging has been further developed in the terms translanguaging and plurilanguaging, discussed in Section 3.1.4.3.

3.1.2. A new vision of the learner in the class

Because the concept of language has a new meaning, the role of the learner needs to be reconceptualized to align with the new vision of language and language learning. The learner/social agent can be seen as a complex dynamic system that operates within broader complex dynamic systems (for example, the language class) in which different elements interact and in which the individual and the social are interdependent. In turn, the class is embedded in the system 'school', which in turn is embedded in the system 'education', which is itself embedded in the system 'society' – of the country concerned. According to complexity theories, all elements in a system are interdependent and small variations in the interaction between elements, whilst interacting with the broader environment, can lead to unforeseeable consequences and the emergence of a new state. Language learning can be seen as an emergent process in which the social agent engages in acts of mediation during which they mobilize all their competences and strategies in a shared construction of meaning and knowledge, with 'a-ha moments' that bring them to a new state of understanding. There are other ways in which complexity is central to language learning. As teachers, we tend to think in terms of accuracy and fluency, but linguistic complexity is at least as important, particularly in the spiralling process that is necessary to move to a higher level of language proficiency. Equally important is the complexity of the concepts

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[37] Saussure, F. de (1922). *Recueil des publications scientifiques de Ferdinand de Saussure*. C. Bally & L. Gautier (Eds.). Genève: Sonor; Lausanne: Payot; Heidelberg : Winter.

[38] Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

[39] Piccardo, E. (in press). Mediation for plurilingual competence: Synergies and implications. In B. Dendrinos (Ed.), *Mediation as negotiation of meanings, plurilingualism and language education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

[40] Cuffari, E. C., Di Paolo, E., & De Jaegher, H. (2015). From participatory sense-making to language: there and back again. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 14*(4), 1089-1125.

involved in a task , which stimulate learners' agency as they collaborate, construct meaning and find ways forward. Ultimately, a self-regulated learner gains a better understanding of the complexity of the situation concerned, of constraints in tasks and of the very learning process. They begin to apply their agency in a more targeted and effective way, as discussed in Section 3.1.4.1 below.

Such a complex view of language learning is linked to what has been described as an ecological approach.[41] Rather than providing inputs, teachers, in this view, should provide exciting, challenging 'affordances,' which are discussed in the following section.

3.1.3. A new vision of learning

As well as a new vision of language and the learner, there is also a new vision of the way in which learning happens. This starts with a move away from the traditional Cartesian view of a separation between mind and body to a holistic view of the mind, body, and environment (which includes culture) being complex dynamic systems embedded in one another. Reasoning is seen as situated. Learning thus needs to be rooted in situated dynamic learning situations[42] that will generate languaging. Learning occurs through 'perception in action'[43] with the 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 thus builds on the capacity to perceive affordances as invitations to action. It is through a cyclical process of perception and action that languaging happens, leading to the emergence of new language, which can be later consolidated through a process of reflection, perhaps with the help of the teacher. The interaction between (perceived) affordances, action and language emergence requires the social agent to engage in different forms of mediation at various stages. To perceive affordances, learners need to develop agency, which is a construct discussed in the next section.

3.1.4. Expanded constructs in language education

The CEFRCV helps to promote several concepts key to language education; perhaps the most important of these are agency, mediation and plurilingualism/pluriculturalism.

3.1.4.1. Agency

The concepts of learner-centredness and autonomy have been current in language education since the beginning of the 1980s. As these terms became sloganized,[44] others that gained currency include learning-centredness, self-direction and self-regulation. All these terms can be considered as describing aspects of learner agency. Agency involves giving students voice and choice, space to initiate action and to express themselves, and

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[41] van Lier L. (2002). An ecological-semiotic perspective on language and linguistics. In C. Kramsch (Ed.), *Language acquisition and language socialization. Ecological perspectives* (pp. 140-164). New York: Continuum.
van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

[42] Masciotra, D., Roth, W-M., & Morel, D. (2007). *Enaction: Towards a Zen mind in learning and teaching*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

[43] van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
van Lier, L. (2007) Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity. *Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning, 1*(1), 46-65.

[44] Schmenk, B., Breidbach, S., & Küster, L. (Eds.). (2018). *Sloganization in language education discourse: Conceptual thinking in the age of academic marketization*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

the possibility to take responsibility. It has been theorized as having four main characteristics, the successful implementation of which will increase chances of success and so lead to the motivating belief that one can be successful – which is called 'self-efficacy:'

- **Intentionality:** having at least a partial plan of action, which is then completed – or adjusted in the light of new information, changed circumstances, and / or experience;
- **Forethought**: considering consequences, anticipating outcomes, selecting actions as likely to succeed based on experience;
- **Self-regulatory processes** in relation to the attainment of concrete goals - that link thought to action – that is to say, monitoring as you go along;
- **Self-reflection** on the soundness of ideas and actions, judged against the outcomes achieved.[45]

Learners are given agency when they take charge of the planning and the carrying through of a project, of an action-oriented task.

3.1.4.2. Mediation

The concept of mediation is closely related to that of languaging and is fundamental to all learning. It is introduced in the CEFR Companion Volume as follows:

> 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). The focus is on the role of language in processes like 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. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional.[46]

Mediation is crucial to understanding, meaning-making and collaborating; in short it is central to acting as a social agent. Mediation has been the object of study in many disciplines but it is central to socio-constructivist and sociocultural theories of (language) education, which have nowadays become mainstream. The fundamental idea behind these approaches is that learning normally happens first in a social context and is internalised later through reflection.[47] The mediator may be the person themselves, a 'significant other' (like a parent, teacher) or a peer.[48]

To facilitate understanding of the complex concept of mediation, it is organized in three categories in the CEFRCV: mediating concepts, mediating text, and mediating

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[45] Bandura, A. (2001) Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*, 1-26. Bandura, A. (2018). Toward a psychology of human agency: Pathways and reflections. *Perspectives on psychological science*, *13*(2), 130-136.

[46] CEFRCV Section 3.4.

[47] Lantolf, J.P. (Ed.) (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[48] Feuerstein, R., Feuerstein, R., & Falik, L. H. (2015). *Beyond smarter: Mediated learning and the brain's capacity for change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

communication. In relation to these three categories, in *mediating concepts*, social agents are languaging as they think something through together, verbalising their thoughts, following up on each others ideas, etc.; in *mediating a text* they are languaging to themselves while making sense of the text and/or finding ways to bring over the main points in a text in a way (possibly another language or variety) that other people will find easier to understand; and in *mediating communication* they are languaging in the process of establishing and regulating relationships with others. In these mediation processes, various dimensions – cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal, emotional, cultural – come into play at different times.

Mediating a text and 'Acting as an intermediary' (one of the categories in mediating communication) were foregrounded in the CEFR 2001 and have been incorporated into curricula and examinations in Greece,[49] Germany,[50] and Switzerland since the early 2000s; mediating concepts is a concept less familiar to language education. Implementing mediation in the curriculum is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3.

3.1.4.3. Plurilingualism

Plurilingualism captures the holistic nature of individual language users/learners' linguistic and cultural repertoires. Learners/users are seen as social agents who draw upon all sorts of resources in their *single*, interrelated, linguistic and cultural repertoires and further develop these resources in their trajectories. Plurilinguals thus have an uneven and changing competence, in which their resources in one language or variety may be very different in nature from their resources in another, and the relationship between the two can change over time.

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence was described in some detail in the CEFR 2001[51] and has been a natural phenomenon in many parts of the world throughout history. As defined above, plurilingualism posits a single, holistic linguistic repertoire that develops throughout one's life trajectory and includes ability in *all* their registers, varieties and languages, however small that development might be. It promotes the valuing of home languages and openness to learning additional languages. The recognition of partial competences in other languages promoted by the CEFR has led to the development of the practice of intercomprehension,[52] or lingua receptiva,[53] in which interlocutors use different (often related) languages.

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[49] Dendrinos, B. (2013). *Testing and teaching mediation. Directions in English language teaching, testing and assessment*. Athens: RCeL publications.
Stathopoulou, M. (2015). *Cross-language mediation in foreign language teaching and testing.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

[50] Reimann, D., & Rössler, A. (Eds.) (2013). *Sprachmittlung im Fremdsprachenunterricht.* Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.
Kolb, E. (2016). *Sprachmittlung: Studien zur Modellierung einer komplexen Kompetenz*. Münster: Münchener Arbeiten zur Fremdsprachen-Forschung, Waxmann.

[51] See CEFR 2001 Sections 1.3; 6.1.3 and 8.1.

[52] De Carlo, M., & Garbarino, S. (2022). Intercomprehension: Strengths and opportunities of a pluralistic approach. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford & G. Lawrence (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 337-359). London and New York: Routledge.

[53] Rehbein, J., ten Thije D., J., & Verschik, A. (2012). Lingua receptiva (LaRa) - Remarks on the quintessence of receptive multilingualism. *The International Journal of Bilingualism*, *16*(3), 248–264.

The distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism was introduced to language education in the 1996 draft CEFR, which was used for formal consultation and piloting with member states, and in a related study.[54] Multilingualism merely describes the presence of separate, multiple languages – as multiculturalism describes the presence of several, separate, cultures – whereas plurilingualism focuses on openness to and the leverage of linguistic and cultural diversity and, in language education, the connections between languages and the development of metalinguistic awareness. Nevertheless, some scholars writing in English have preferred to retain the term multilingualism and modulate it with adjectives like holistic, dynamic, active, integrated, and inclusive, in an attempt to emulate the characteristics of plurilingualism.

An important concept in plurilingualism is the notion of the linguistic and cultural repertoire,[55] which expands as a consequence of the individual's life trajectory:

> The individual's plurilingual repertoire is therefore made up of various languages he/she has absorbed in various ways (childhood learning, teaching, independent acquisition, etc.) and in which he/she has acquired different skills (conversation, listening, reading, etc.) to different levels. The languages in the repertoire may be assigned different, perhaps specialised, functions, such as communicating within the family, socialising with neighbouring, working or learning, and, as has been pointed out, provide building blocks for affiliation to groups which see themselves as having shared cultural features and their own identifying languages.[56]

Plurilingualism has already informed multiple pedagogies (for instance the *Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches* - FREPA[57] - lists a series of pluralistic approaches and translanguaging teaching practices can be seen as "dynamic plurilingual pedagogies"[58]). Even though it focuses on the learners' holistic repertoires, plurilingualism does not deny the presence of named languages as the 'stronger' version of translanguaging once proposed.[59] In fact, from the perspective of complexity theory, languages are seen as dynamic phenomena in constant development, with each named language being conceptualized as a complex dynamic system that goes through various temporary states of balance in an ongoing process. So what is commonly referred to as a 'named language' is but a temporary state of the system. Furthermore, plurilingualism holds that users/learners

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[54] Coste D., Moore D., & Zarate G. (1997). *Compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle: Vers un cadre européen commun de référence pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues vivantes*, Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg. Reprinted in English in 2009 as *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Studies towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching*.

[55] Busch, B. (2017). Expanding the notion of the linguistic repertoire: On the concept of Spracherleben – The lived experience of language. *Applied Linguistics*, *38*(3), 340-58.

[56] Beacco, J. C. (2005). *Languages and language repertoires: Plurilingualism as a way of life in Europe* - A reference study. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 19.

[57] Candelier, M., Camilleri-Grima, A., Castellotti, V., de Pietro, J.-F., Lörincz, I., Meißner, F.-J. & Schröder-Sura, A. (2012). *CARAP – FREPA. A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures: Competences and resources*. Graz: ECML and Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

[58] Garcia, O., & Flores, N. (2012). Multilingual pedagogies. In M. Martin-Jones, A. Blackledge & A. Creese (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (pp. 232–246). London: Routledge.

[59] Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2007). *Disinventing and reconstituting languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *6*(3), 281-307.

should be equipped with the socio-linguistic knowledge to empower their agency concerning when to translanguage and when to use one particular language or variety, as suggested in the quotation above. Another difference to translanguaging is that plurilingualism is concerned with both home languages and additional languages/language varieties and cultures, as also with the very idea of awakening to new languages and cultures ("*Éveil aux langues*"), whereas translanguaging is primarily concerned with the relationship between the dominant language of the context and the language of the home or origin.

In line with the complex view of language, linguistic diversity and the language learning process that informs plurilingualism, an important concept to operationalize plurilingualism is *plurilanguaging,* which builds on seeing language as a process rather than a codified entity. Plurilanguaging theorizes the creative way plurilinguals approach the construction of meaning in a five-pronged model articulated into: (a) a cyclical process in which learners discover language and construct meaning; (b) an agentic process in which learners select linguistic content and forms and organize them, and in so doing shape their own repertoire; (c) a process of dealing with phases of 'chaos', which inevitably characterizes the learning process; (d) an awareness-raising process of linguistic, metalinguistic and cultural aspects that enhances learners' perception; and (e) an empowering process in relation to linguistic norms.[60] This model captures the dynamics of the way learners move forward, stressing the spiralling nature of learning as a form of non-linear construction of knowledge through action that increasingly develops awareness and a sense of empowerment. In the plurilanguaging process, learners naturally exploit all their plurilingual repertoire as well as available tools, artefacts and multimodal opportunities in the environment while engaging in different forms of mediation throughout.

3.2. Blocks identified in the field of language education

During the Reflection Day held in June 2023 that was referred to in Section 1.2, many experts, particularly those who are active in the teaching of English as foreign/second language, pointed out that the literature language teaching methodologies seems not to have moved forward from the communicative approach of the 1980s (including its strong form, the classic task-based approach), despite the research outlined above and despite vast social changes in the majority of countries, due to migration and professional mobility. Even in terms of expanding language education and diversifying the offer of languages, apart from the trend to introduce the teaching of an additional language in primary schools, surprisingly little seems to have changed. In fact, the introduction of the teaching of an additional language in primary education seems to have merely added to the inexorable advance of English, at the expense of other European languages, rather than promoting a plurilingual approach.

The experts who participated in the Reflection Day also highlighted the difficulty of introducing sustainable change in language education, echoing the broader discussion in the field. Although it is beyond the scope of this document to examine the reasons behind this difficulty, we can identify some of the more challenging obstacles to achieving change

[60] Piccardo, E. (2017). Plurilingualism as a catalyzer for creativity in superdiverse societies: A systemic analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02169

in language education, which – leaving aside the question of the low status and remuneration of teachers and researchers – are explored in the next subsections.

3.2.1. The deficit perspective

The deficit perspective is the opposite of the CEFR's positive perspective on language competences, including all sorts of partial competences, expressed by its systematic formulation of proficiency in terms of what a person 'can do' rather than what they cannot do. A fundamental problem, common to all forms of education, is the blinkered nature of the unconscious bias of the monolingual, monocultural gaze: the tendency to put a certain label on a person, to underestimate and pigeonhole them because of a particular characteristic, a certain way of speaking, a tendency to repeat the same phonological or grammatical error, or just to belong to a particular social, ethnic group. Language support for children with a migration background that puts them in separate classes can lead to stigmatisation; pull-out approaches that integrate them in class and pull them out for tutoring in the language of schooling often timetable these sessions for when the rest of class are learning an additional language, thus depriving newcomers of the opportunity to demonstrate their probable advantage, as plurilinguals, in learning an additional language. The effect of this common tendency is to make the individual person invisible.

There is also a danger that linguistic support for adult migrants can degenerate into infantilization; an exclusive focus on alphabetisation can fail to take account of their existing plurilingualism, their strong oracy skills, and their superior verbal memory – all of which could lead them to in fact make faster progress than monolingual learners in spoken skills for specific, important situations in the public and personal domains.[61]

3.2.2. Language seen as an object

The deficit perspective discussed above is very much linked to the traditional view of language as an object, as a fixed, static code separate from and superior to mere language use, whose purity is defended by academies set up for that purpose. This reified object then becomes the object of study, a 'content subject' like any other. From here it is a short step to conceiving language learning as just a process of learning by heart bilingual vocabulary lists, verbal declensions, and irregular verbs. This is not to say that there is not some studying and memorizing to be done in learning a language, but memory works by association, as research with concordances in linguistic corpora has demonstrated.[62] Brainstorming vocabulary associated with a theme or situation is a far more effective form of learning than vocabulary lists. Learning a new language in the context of doing something meaningful – for example in a project, in creating an artefact, in a real-life situation – creates an association with the success of that action that aids retention.

[61] Mady, C. (2014). Learning French as a second official language in Canada: Comparing monolingual and bilingual students at Grade 6. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *17*(3), 330-344. Mady, C. (2015). Immigrants outperform Canadian-born groups in French immersion: Examining factors that influence their achievement. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *12*(3), 298-311.

[62] The company words keep: collocation (lexical); colligation (grammatical).

3.2.3. Keeping languages separate

One of the most counterproductive practices in language education is the way that languages are often taught in complete isolation from each other; if different teachers are concerned, there is usually little or no coordination between them. Even when, as in some educational systems, the same person teaches two additional languages, it is unusual for them to make comparisons between these languages, or between the language of schooling and the additional languages. One of the main aims of the CEFR 2001 was to create a metalanguage that would lead to networking between the teachers of different languages, including the language of schooling, so that learners would benefit from the synergies of languages taught in a similar way, and that comparison would become more natural and contribute to metalinguistic awareness. This aim has only partially been achieved as the power of cultural institutes (e.g., British Council, Goethe Institute) and examination bodies focused on one specific language, their roles in teacher education and their influence on coursebooks, has tended to perpetuate separate pedagogic cultures and communities. There are exceptions, where schools have adopted a policy of languages across the curriculum, or in certain university language centres, but generally speaking languages tend to continue to be taught in siloes.

Unfortunately, individuals are also encouraged to keep their languages separate to the extent that some people develop what are almost two different personae, striving to imitate the idealised 'native speaker' in the target language concerned. When people are essentially shamed into obscuring or negating their language and culture of origin as they strive to fit into the context of a dominant culture, this can have a profoundly negative effect on their self-esteem and the development of a harmonious plurilingual identity. Immigrant parents often avoid speaking their mother tongue to their children for fear that this will confuse them, arrest their development in the dominant language and harm their progress at school and hence future chances in life. In fact, the opposite is the case. Research shows that children have no problem with their cognitive and linguistic development even if two languages other than what will become their language of schooling are spoken in the home.[63] In terms of cognitive development, it is in fact important that children are exposed to a rich linguistic environment in the home, to learn to read and write in their home language(s) and to continue developing their proficiency in it alongside acquiring skills in and/or transferring skills to the language of schooling.

3.2.4. The elephant in the room: English

Currently, there appears to be an increasing focus on competition in education, with an accompanying instrumental perspective on the learning of additional languages that privileges only 'useful' high status languages and often the pursuit of qualifications in those languages. Parents focus on investing in their children's social capital, and this favours the continued advance of one language – English – as a lingua franca. Bilingual programmes/schools and CLIL[64] programmes almost invariably involve English. English is the first additional language in virtually every non-English-speaking country. PISA 2025 will assess foreign language competence – but only in English. Over 75% of scientific journals

[63] Baker, C. (1988). *Key issues in bilingualism and bilingual education*. Clevedon: Multilingual matters.

[64] Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge University Press.

(35,070 in 2020) publish in English; even 10 years ago it was estimated that 80-90% of all research articles were written in English and today estimates go up to 98% for some fields. Increasingly, English is now indispensable for academic, business and intellectual life but there is a danger that the consequent loss of plurality may lead to monocular vision, to groupthink, which will be very detrimental, particularly to social sciences and the humanities[65] as well as to society as a whole.

In addition, recent political and social developments suggest that we are living in a period of increasing intolerance in which societies, especially in Europe, appear to be more and more looking inwards rather than – as for example in the 1960s or 1990s – opening up. Immigration seems to be less and less welcome; linguistic and cultural diversity is seen as a threat rather than as an asset.

As mentioned in Section 1.3, the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2022) adopted by member states recognises that the assumption that one additional language – English – is enough, and that minority/immigrant languages are harmful to social cohesion, is a serious problem. The combination of these two tendencies is a process of uniformization: to privilege the locally dominant language and English and to reduce the space granted to other languages, whether these be home languages or additional languages, for example that of the neighbouring country.

3.2.5. Testing culture

In most educational systems, the dominance of testing is increasing rather than decreasing and constitutes a serious obstacle to effective language learning. Standardized tests become the driving force and test preparation (teaching to the test) becomes more important than actual learning, trapping teachers in practices known to be ineffective. In addition, some countries (e.g. the Netherlands) still do not include oral assessment at all in their national examinations. To make things worse, the move to online testing does not always lead to exploitation of the opportunities offered by a digital environment – not to mention artificial intelligence. For example, the *PISA 2025 Framework for Foreign Language Assessment* eschews interaction and continues to test the four skills (listening, reading, spoken production, and writing) in complete isolation, using picture-based item types to do so that would not have been out of place in the 1970s.

3.2.5.1. The reliability / validity trade off

This sort of thing happens because formal assessment of language competence faces two major, related challenges: firstly, moving on from traditional psychometric views of test reliability and, secondly, the issue of giving a meaningful context to the test tasks. The failure to address these challenges was described already in 1982 as the great reliability / validity trade off. Natural language use is complex, contextualised and 'messy.' Psychometrics naturally seeks to control variables and narrow the construct being assessed in order to eliminate as much 'irrelevant' variance as possible and achieve higher reliability. This produces a longer reporting scale, which then separates out the candidates more accurately. This quest for 'purity' of the construct tends to lead to discrete,

[65] Barbier, J.-C. (2022) Social sciences' last hope: Giving plurilingualism a chance? In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford & G. Lawrence (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 263-275). London and New York: Routledge.

decontextualized test items. In the worst case it also causes what is called 'method' effect: as a large part of the variance caught in such an artificial exercise is actually the ability to answer the kind of questions concerned, rather than language ability. Nowadays, to avoid this issue, reliability is generally seen as just one necessary but not sufficient aspect of test validity.

3.2.5.2. The power of gatekeeping tests

The gatekeeping power of tests has produced an entire literature on the social justice issues that this causes. Fortunately, in most countries in Europe one does not have to pass a specific test to attend university – an upper secondary school certificate suffices. However, the form that the tests for such certificates take is often affected by the issues discussed in the previous paragraph. In addition, for international students to enter university, or even the foundation course leading to university, and for immigrants to get a temporary or permanent residence permit or citizenship, a language test reporting results in terms of CEFR levels is normally required. All European countries require a level of B2 or B2+ for university entrance, which – although this choice is not based on any empirical evidence[66] – seems intuitively logical when one looks at the B2/B2+ descriptors. However, with the requirements for immigration, the situation is more varied and more troublesome, with the standard for citizenship varying from A2 to B2, and a few countries already requiring B1 for permanent residence. In addition, even though some countries do try to consider what activities new immigrants and new citizens actually need to be able to handle (e.g., Germany, Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland), most countries unfortunately continue to require an across-the-board global level, which erects a barrier by including an ability in writing as high as that in, for example, listening, which does not reflect the communicative needs of immigrants.[67]

3.2.5.3. The monolingual mindset

As discussed above in Section 3.2.3, the current approach in many educational contexts is to keep the teaching and testing of language completely separate, focused on the idealised 'native speaker' as the norm to which learner performance is compared. This mentality is, as mentioned above, strengthened by the position of the cultural institutes (e.g., British Council, Goethe Institute) and examination bodies assessing only one language. There are, however, some signs of developments in that cross-linguistic mediation between the target language and the language of schooling has been a feature of curricula and assessment in Germany, Greece and Switzerland for some 20 years, as also mentioned above. More recently, an oral examination leading to a Certificate of Plurilingualism, which involves both additional languages as well as the language of schooling, has been introduced in Austria.[68]

However, this is only part of the picture. Children with a migration background are disadvantaged in formal tests in a language with which they are less familiar than their peers. For this reason, there has recently been research on 'multilingual assessment'

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[66] Deygers, B., Zeidler, B., Vilcu, D., & Carlsen, C. H. (2018). One framework to unite them all? Use of the CEFR in European university entrance policies. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *15*(1), 3-15.

[67] Rocca, L., Carlsen, C. H., & Deygers, B. (2020). *Linguistic integration of adult migrants: Requirements and learning opportunities*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publication.

[68] See Sections 7.2.2 on mediation and assessment, and Section 7.2.3. on plurilingualism and assessment for more details.

(making the rubrics in subject tests available in multiple languages) and, more fundamentally, calls for a rethinking of assessment away from standardized tests towards approaches that integrate assessment into learning and give a more holistic assessment of learners. The challenges of a plurilingual assessment approach, that would take account of learners' linguistic and cultural resources and make connections between the languages they are learning, is thus starting to be discussed.[69] This issue is taken further in Chapter 7.

3.2.6. Inadequate conditions for teacher education

Finally, one of the reasons why progress in language education happens so slowly, especially in secondary and tertiary education, concerns teacher education. In many tertiary contexts there are few contacts between language departments, or between teachers within those departments, and little professional development. The result is that there is a lack of quality assurance when it comes to methodologies employed. This is a particular problem since in many contexts, the pre-service training of new teachers often takes place in separate language departments or in separate language programmes of teacher training institutes, rather than being undertaken in a multidisciplinary programme. In many countries the training of language teachers (including teachers of the language of schooling) is sometimes focused on literature, neglecting the sociolinguistic dimension. Finally, for many teachers it is the textbooks and tests that are the actual training tools and most of these present a very traditional view of language.

Then, even when pre-service teacher training is excellent, there is the problem that some new teachers soon conform to the practices of their new peers and the way they themselves were taught languages at school. This tendency is accelerated when the training institution is not in a position to select the host teachers or to give them guidelines, and by the fact that the new teachers generally have no structured further contact with the pre-service training institute once they have joined their school. This is linked to the overall problem of a lack of continuous professional development for language teachers in many countries. Where such development opportunities do exist, they often take the form of conferences and information sessions at which teachers may get new ideas and even materials, but have little opportunity to work on them together or network with peers.

[69] Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Ollivier, C. (2023). (Eds.), *Assessment of plurilingual competence in educational settings*. London and New York: Routledge.

4. The CEFRCV: A vector for reform in language education

The CEFR Companion Volume is an example of the kind of new tools and frameworks that endeavour to overcome some of the blocks discussed above and help language education to move forward.[70] The CEFR 2020 descriptors in the Companion Volume aim to raise teachers' awareness of the mediated and complex nature of language learning and teaching that was discussed in Section 3.1, help teachers (and learners) overcome the myth of the 'native-speaker' as the standard against which learners should be compared, and spark teachers and learners' plurilingual agency. The CEFR 2001 already emphasised the centrality of interaction and pragmatic competence, the development of the linguistic and cultural repertoire throughout life, and the importance of partial competences (e.g. understanding a language but not speaking it). The CEFRCV now builds on the new, relevant threads in research that were outlined above, reconceptualizing language as a constantly evolving process of '*languaging*', with social agency and mediation at the core of this new vision. By overcoming the prevalent idealisation of the 'native speaker' together with the view of languages as static, pure and codified entities, the CEFRCV completely shifts the way language learners/users should be perceived, particularly at the level of production and interaction.

The CEFRCV emphasises an enquiry-based, creative, plurilingual, interdisciplinary vision of language education. In so doing, it goes beyond the rather simplistic dualism of the understanding of the difference between plurilingualism and multilingualism that emerged immediately after the publication of the CEFR in 2001 (plurilingual for persons; multilingual for societies), showing that the issue is more complex than that, with linguistic diversity often seen as a simple addition of separate languages even at the level of the individual and, vice versa, with attempts to overcome language separation increasingly made at the level of communities.

Above all, the CEFRCV rebalances the common perception of the CEFR, underlining the primacy of innovation in learning and teaching in the CEFR aims, and sustains innovation in pedagogy through its focus on social agency and action in the action-oriented approach.

Surprising though it may seem, there is a general lack of knowledge about the CEFR, in large part caused by misunderstandings and misrepresentations that are discussed below in Section 4.1, and little is done in teacher education to overcome this lack of knowledge. In fact, the CEFR is often solely seen and understood as a standard for defining levels, which mainly appear as labels on textbooks and examinations. In addition, many teachers, in common with many other language professionals, do not understand how the CEFR's action-oriented approach is different from the communicative approach that informs their textbooks and which tends to perpetuate traditional ways of thinking and teaching. Publishers are naturally attracted to global markets, following demand, which tends to mitigate against innovation in coursebook development.

[70] In North America, an example of such a tool would be the US *NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication* and its related reflection tool for learners. Another assessment tool that has been developed for Indigenous language revitalization in Canada, *NETOLNEW's Assessment Tool*, is also based on can do statements.

The following three sections of this chapter (a) try and address some of the issues that are often misunderstood; (b) elaborate on what the action-oriented approach highlighted in the CEFRCV involves; and (c) discuss the role of teacher education in leveraging the CEFRCV for innovation and reform.

4.1. Continuing misinterpretations

The CEFR and CEFRCV suffer from a number of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, some practical and some ideological, that tend to be repeated without fact checking. A related issue is that many language professionals only know the CEFR through descriptors – or even just the global and summary scales. Since the CEFR 2001 was generally considered to be difficult to read, the CEFR vision is presented in the CEFRCV in a concise manner (CEFRCV Chapter 2) and the entire set of descriptor scales is reorganized in a user-friendly, colour-coded format with graphic organizers of the scales and each scale accompanied by a rationale.

Some of the more persistent misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the CEFR/CEFRCV that result are the following:

Misrepresentation 1: "The CEFR/CEFRCV is an authoritarian, restrictive instrument imposed from above like a straight-jacket"
The CEFR empowers teachers and administrators by providing a rationale to challenge entrenched, inappropriate educational practices. For this reason, use of the CEFR is recommended by both the Council of Europe and the European Union, but, as is the case for all recommended tools, the decision whether or not to implement curriculum and pedagogical reform lies in the hands of each local authority. The CEFR has inspired much innovation in many contexts, including outside Europe, with the first step in any implementation being a situational analysis and awareness-raising. Several ECML projects have contributed to innovation in language education in line with the vision of the CEFR and two in particular have provided useful tools for CEFR-informed curriculum innovation and teacher education.[71]

Misrepresentation 2: "The CEFR/CEFCV is based on the native-speaker model"
The CEFR does not, as has traditionally been the case, take a *deficiency* perspective - comparing learners to idealised 'native speakers'; it does not consider learners as apprentice 'native speakers' but rather takes a *plurilingual proficiency* perspective, promoting the acquisition of practical proficiency in a number of languages, with the development of transversal metalinguistic knowledge that will underpin the further learning of languages already in the individual's repertoire and the addition of new ones. The shift is especially clear in the conceptualization of the new analytical scale for phonological competence that replaces the 2001 scale. Informed by research in the field, which foregrounds intelligibility and comprehensibility of the message, the new scale

[71] CEFR-QualiMatrix: A quality assurance matrix for CEFR use.
Pathways through assessing, learning and teaching in the CEFR.

points out that other languages in learners' repertoire may influence features of pronunciation, intonation and accent across all proficiency levels up to and including C2.[72]

Misrepresentation 3: "The CEFR/CEFRCV focuses on standardization and imposes an instrumentalist view of language learning"

This view sees the CEFR and its descriptor scales as a potential instrument of oppression and focuses on possible abuses. It rejects the definition of goals with descriptors as reductionist, and claims that the use of CEFR descriptors creates a narrow, standardized, homogenized curriculum across Europe. In fact, the CEFR vision is exactly the opposite. The reason why there are so many different scales of descriptors – which in any case are only illustrative – is precisely to reject a unidimensional, homogenized view of language and promote the conscious identification of the needs of particular groups, with the creation of resulting needs profiles. Needs profiles can then be used to develop relevant pedagogical pathways, rather than assuming that all learners should follow the same linear path in learning a language. This is particularly important in relation to immigrants.

Misrepresentation 4: "The CEFR/CEFRCV is a standard for assessment"

This is one of the most common and persistent misunderstandings, since most users meet the CEFR for the first time in relation to the international examinations that have aligned themselves to it. In some contexts, the CEFR has been implemented with an overemphasis on the levels as standards. In fact, descriptors are meant to be illustrative in nature, that is, to show what might be expected at a certain level of proficiency. The main role of the CEFR descriptors is to inform planning in language education: at the levels of curricula, goal setting, programme, and task design. Descriptors suggest activities suitable for a particular level, help users/learners understand why they are undertaking such activities, and can be used for teacher, peer and self monitoring of performance in tasks.

Misrepresentation 5: "CEFR/CEFRCV descriptors are not 'scientifically-based' "

This criticism is a common one. In fact, the CEFR descriptors have been acknowledged as the best researched descriptors for language learning that exist.[73] First of all, they are based on extensive previous research in second language acquisition, language proficiency and applied psychology. In the phase of developing the descriptors, the core threads that had emerged from this research were considered and extensive literature on them was consulted, analyzed and discussed by the development team. In this phase, experts in relevant fields were also involved to provide further input and update literature on specific aspects. Subsequently, core concepts that had been found in the relevant literature were formulated into draft descriptors. In addition, the descriptors were developed in a cyclical process of consultation and revision with an extended group of experts. Then – after development – they went through a rigorous three-stage validation process both in 1994-1997 (350 teachers in Switzerland) and in 2014-2019 (1,300 teachers across Europe and

[72] The conceptualization and development of the new phonology scale can be found in the report *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment - Phonological scale revision process. Report*, available in English and French.

[73] Hulstijn, H., Alderson, J.C.A., & Schoonen, R. (2010). Developmental stages in second-language acquisition and levels of second-language proficiency: Are there links between them? In I. Bartning, M. Martin & I. Vedder (2010). (Eds.), *Communicative proficiency and linguistic development: Intersections between SLA and language testing research* (pp. 11-20). Eurosla Monographs Series 1.

beyond), with final calibration informed by Latent Trait Theory.[74] As a result, the progression described in the 2001 descriptors has been replicated in follow-up projects and confirmed by research in second language acquisition.[75] Overall, the two projects (1994-1997 and 2014-2019) followed a six-step procedure: (a) development; (b) validation; (c) analysis and revision; (d) consultation; (e) piloting and (f) finalisation.

Misrepresentation 6: "Mediation is a difficult and unnecessary concept, since it is just a combination of other skills"

Like interaction, mediation is distinct from reception and production – which incorporate the four skills that rarely exist in complete isolation – while also integrating other skills (for instance oral interaction integrates listening and speaking). Mediation goes a step further than interaction as it is at the core of learning, communication, and the (co-)construction of meaning. Mediation is also closely related to individual *noticing* and to collaborative learning. *Mediating concept*s is what happens when we individually think things through, and/or brainstorm and plan together. *Mediating texts* is a common, everyday activity in multilingual contexts and *Mediation of communication*, within or across languages, an essential part of community life.

Misrepresentation 7: "In the CEFR/CEFRCV and in plurilingualism, languages are seen separately, unlike in translanguaging"

This criticism is targeted at plurilingualism by unfounded arguments, often by people who have little knowledge of the CEFR. In fact, plurilingualism sees all the languages and varieties of a speaker as part of a single, holistic language repertoire and a plurilingual classroom is one in which linguistic diversity is welcomed and built on to maximize communication, awareness and learning as well as to promote inclusivity. The many CEFR descriptor scales offer the means to create a plurilingual profile across all languages, as well as, with 2020 descriptors for plurilingual and pluricultural competence, to consider plurilingual/pluricultural actions.

Misrepresentation 8: "The CEFR/CEFRCV is a manifestation of the neoliberal agenda of the European institutions"

This ideological objection confuses the Council of Europe (an organisation primarily concerned with the protection of Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law, with 46 member states) with the European Union (an organisation for economic and political cooperation with 26 member states, primarily concerned with the free movement of goods, services, people and capital between its member states). Consequently, this objection sees the CEFR/CEFRCV as a mere instrument for the application of market forces in education. In fact, the CEFR descriptors provide scaffolding for the organization of an inclusive, action-oriented language education. The new set of modality inclusive descriptors with their focus on mediation and plurilingualism further highlights the mission of the CEFR, which is that

[74] Henning, G. (1984): Advantages of latent trait measurement in language testing. *Language Testing, 1/2*, 123-133.
Linacre, John M. (1989).*Multi-faceted Measurement*. Chicago: MESA Press.

[75] See, for example Bartning et al., (2010).

of being a tool to foster social justice by protecting language rights as part of Human Rights and intercultural dialogue.[76]

Misrepresentation 9: "Plurilingualism is an elitist concept applied to the learning of high-status additional languages by the privileged"
Plurilingualism is a natural feature of human societies within and particularly beyond Europe, both in history and the present day. Since the concept was introduced to language education in drafts of the CEFR and a related study,[77] it has been made very clear that plurilingualism embraces and values all languages – home languages and members of linguistic minorities as well as additional languages – and that it promotes an openness to and valorisation of other languages and cultures. In European education systems, the opportunity to learn additional languages is offered to students as part of their curriculum.

Misrepresentation 10: "The CEFR/CEFRCV is just another colonizing tool from Europe"
The name of the CEFR contains the adjective 'European' because it was created within a Council of Europe project, but like *The Threshold Level* (see Section 2.1.1) that preceded it, the CEFR has been made available to all who wish to use it and has been increasingly appreciated outside Europe.[78] Language professionals in 52 non-European countries took part in the CEFRCV project as a result. Where the CEFR is seen as connected to neocolonialism, this is mainly the result of local misapplication of it as a tool for reinforcing the global hegemony of the English language, the learning of English for instrumental purposes only, and the certification of the resulting proficiency in English through international examinations. In fact, the CEFR and CEFRCV contain a lot of concepts relevant to Human Rights, the valuing of diversity, and decolonialization itself, and the CEFR is intended to be customized flexibly with local realities. In addition, the strength of the CEFR is that it offers wider educational aims rather than a narrow view of language proficiency and can be implemented for the teaching of all languages.

4.2. The action-oriented approach

The CEFR proposes a change from a linear to a complex vision in an action-oriented approach. The action-oriented approach is not just the communicative approach with a new name.

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[76] Descriptors of levels of competence predate the neoliberal ideology by decades, originating in the field of child development and the training of nurses:
Champney, H. (1941). The measurement of parent behavior. In: *Child Development* 12, 2, 131–66.
Smith, P.C., & Kendall, J.M. (1963). Retranslation of expectations: An approach to the construction of unambiguous anchors for rating scales, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 47(2), 149-155.

[77] Coste D., Moore D., & Zarate G. (1997),.*Compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle: Vers un cadre européen commun de référence pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues vivantes*, Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg. Reprinted in English in 2009 as *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Studies towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching*.

[78] Byram, M., & Parmenter, L. (Eds.). (2012). *The Common European Framework of Reference: The globalisation of language policy.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
Negishi, M., Takada, T. & Tono, Y. (2013). A progress report on the development of the CEFR-J. In: E. D. Galaczi & C. J. Weir (Eds.), *Exploring language frameworks: Proceedings of the ALTE Krakow Conference, July 2011* (pp. 135–163). Cambridge: Studies in Language Testing Series 36, Cambridge University Press.

The vision of the CEFR 2001 edition was already 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 approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. (CEFR 2001, p.11)

The CEFRCV highlights this action-oriented pedagogical vision:

> The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures. [...] this is not educationally neutral. It implies that the teaching and learning process is driven by action, that it is action-oriented. It also clearly suggests planning backwards from learners' real-life communicative needs, with consequent alignment between curriculum, teaching and assessment. (CEFRCV, 2020, p. 29)

The CEFR's action-oriented approach represents a shift away from syllabi based on a linear progression through language structures, or a predetermined set of notions and functions, towards syllabi based on needs analysis, oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions. The CEFR emphasises that the starting point for curriculum planning and for teaching, not to mention assessment, is the definition of what the learners *need to do* in the language(s) concerned. The categories of 'can do' descriptors can be very helpful in that process and examples of a type of needs profile that can result from such a process are shown in CEFRCV Section 2.7. The various competences (linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, etc.) necessary to fulfill these needs – including relevant teaching 'content' (functions, notions, grammar and vocabulary areas, etc.) – can be deduced from the 'can do' descriptors. The issue is that, rather than studying 'the language' in that linear way, users/learners should learn the language that they need in order to complete necessary tasks in the domain(s) – personal, public, occupational, educational – that are relevant to them.

In the action-oriented approach learners are seen as *social agents* who (co)-construct meaning in real-life tasks, while engaging in communicative activities (reception, production, interaction, mediation ...), drawing upon a series of competences (language and general), and using communicative strategies. Action-orientation moves away from an accumulation of knowledge and know-how toward a logic of strategic activation of resources in order to achieve an objective. Thus, the action-oriented approach uses scenarios and projects as a means to structure learning around actions that are vivid, defined and concrete. Scenarios provide a frame and context to a didactic sequence of a certain number of lessons that ends with a real-life oriented, culminating task, which produces one or more artifact(s).

A key issue in the action-oriented approach is the construction of meaning, which is intimately connected to mediation, as discussed below. Meaning is not transmitted from teacher to learner but is something learners have to construct for themselves: teaching is

simply a catalyst for learning.[79] Neither action-orientation nor the related construction of meaning are unique to language teaching or the CEFR; they are, like mediation and agency, mainstream educational concepts that emerged around 2000 and have nourished educational research over that last two decades and fed into the CEFRCV.

4.2.1. The communicative approach and the action-oriented approach

People often ask about the difference between the action-oriented approach and the communicative approach. A simple answer is that the action-oriented approach embeds and goes beyond the communicative approach, including its 'strong version,'[80] task-based language learning (TBLT), extending and prioritizing learner agency and plurilingualism.

The action-oriented and communicative approaches/TBLT do have much in common, for example: learning to use the language, not just learning elements of the language; real life situations and authentic materials; communicative functions; pair and group work, and – in TBLT – use of tasks. However, even though there are more recent interpretations of TBLT that are more holistic and action-oriented,[81] generally tasks used in textbooks informed by communicative approach and TBLT are very narrowly defined. In addition, in TBLT unlike in the action-oriented approach, the concepts of mediation, agency, plurilingualism/pluriculturalism are lacking.

Perhaps the most significant differences between the action-oriented and communicative approaches are the following: (a) action-orientation involves longer term planning of didactic sequences of several linked lessons, usually contextualised by a scenario; (b) classroom learning is not a preparation for some future language use situations, rather the class is an authentic context for language use; (c) the task is not directly language-related, it is not an excuse to practice particular language, but rather involves solving a problem, accomplishing a mission, which usually implies the creation of an artefact;[82] and (d) the focus in the action-oriented approach is on learners' situated ***agency***.

> An action-based approach is related to other approaches, such as content-based, project-based and task-based teaching and learning. However, it makes agency, rather than the particular curricular organisation, the defining construct.[83]

In the action-oriented approach, unlike in the communicative approach:

- objectives are expressed in real-life terms – expressed in 'can do' descriptors;

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[79] This is the signification of the term 'constructive' in the expression 'constructive alignment.' See Biggs, J. (2003). *Aligning teaching and assessment to curriculum objectives. Imaginative curriculum project.* LTSN imaginative curriculum guide IC022. York: Higher Education Academy.

[80] Larsen-Freeman D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (3rd edn), p. 150.

[81] See, for example Nunn, R. (2006). Designing holistic units for task-based learning. *Asian EFL Journal, 8* (3), 69-93, and van den Branden, K. (Ed.) (2006). *Task-based language education: From theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[82] Bourguignon C. (2006), "De l'approche communicative à l' « approche communicactionnelle »: une rupture épistémologique en didactique des langues-cultures", *Synergies Europe,* 1, pp. 58-73.

[83] van Lier, L. (2007). Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity. *Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning, 1*(1), 46-65. p.46.

- the tasks are not primarily about language – tasks are rooted in action and involve creating an artefact or performance;
- the tasks are integrated – they do not practise isolated skills;
- the tasks are designed to give students choice and agency – it is they who take responsibility and design what they are doing;
- the tasks give students a 'mission' to fulfill – often defined by conditions and constraints;
- students construct meaning, often together – they do not do fluency practice of certain language based on a more or less memorized script;
- the approach implies iterative cycles of collective preparation, drafting and redrafting;
- transparent assessment with descriptors – including the monitoring of collaboration in groups, the mediation of communication and instances showing pluricultural competence, the evaluation of sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects – is integrated into teaching and learning, often with peer and self- as well as teacher assessment.

As mentioned above, putting action-orientation into practice involves purposeful, collaborative tasks whose primary focus is not language, which usually result in a product/artefact (e.g., a poster, a blog, a video, an infographic, a design for an event, a debate, a performance of some kind). Descriptors help to design such tasks, to observe and monitor learners' work, and (self-)assess the language use. By performing tasks in which they can *act* in the language, the learners mobilise, combine and further develop their competences and strategies.

Thus the approach to tasks in the action-oriented approach is all rather different from the way tasks have been used in the communicative approach since the early 1980s. In the communicative approach, tasks are very often fluency activities to practise a specific language point that has been introduced. Furthermore, most tasks in the communicative approach, including TBLT, are very closely structured and the practice is highly controlled. There is generally a limited degree of agency – personal engagement, opportunities to make decisions, to shape the process of completing the task or the form of the final product. Many types of communicative tasks (like exchanging personal information, telling stories, choosing the best holiday/pieces of furniture from a given list, etc.) are rather mechanical and their only motivation is to have students do fluency practice.

One classic work on TBLT[84] offers examples of seven different categories of task, from more restricted and mechanical (Listing; Ordering and sequencing; Matching; and Comparing) to more open (Sharing personal experience; Problem-solving; and finally, Projects and creative tasks: class newspaper, poster, survey, fantasy, etc.). They define the latter category, which they also call task projects, as: "a sequence of tasks based around one specific topic, each task with its own outcome or purpose, which culminate in a specified end-product that can be shown to others, displayed or made public in some way,

[84] Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

for others to appreciate."[85] This final category, task project, shows many similarities with the action-oriented approach.

The more ambitious example of a task project shown as an example is one at tertiary level in which small groups of students each prepare a 20-minute radio programme in Spanish to an authentic set format, using as input articles about and examples of radio programmes to this format and – for content – an interview with Oliver Stone on his documentary about Fidel Castro. There is even a follow up activity in discussion with a recent Cuban immigrant, adding further to the authenticity of the project. Students read the transcript of the interview with Castro, watch Stone's documentary and then, given the list of questions used in a different interview with Castro, they work in groups of three to choose what they consider to be the five best questions from the list, answer them with the material from the documentary, produce a script for their radio programme, focusing on what in their view are conflicting statements made. and then record it.

In this example anchored in TBLT, there are many features of the action-oriented approach. However, some critical aspects of the action-oriented approach are still missing. The input material is very authentic, and the follow up conversation with the recent immigrant adds an element of real-life contextualisation. There is a clear, realistic goal to the entire action in the creation of an artefact, with reflection and collaboration from the students required. There is a didactic sequence of subtasks leading to the culminating task. However, learner *agency* remains constrained, as is typical in the communicative approach and TBLT, in which teachers often orchestrate the task with precise instructions, which tend to produce similar outcomes from the different groups of students. Here all the material is provided by the teacher: the students, though at tertiary level, have no need to fully engage with the issue at stake and do some personal research, either individually or in the group. There are precise instructions for students on how to approach the task (for instance they must choose the five best questions from a list provided and work from that). As the path to follow is pre-set, there is little decision-making process on how to carry out the task successfully, which would provide opportunities for different forms of mediation at various moments (mediation of communication, texts and concepts) in a process of co-construction of meaning.[86]

The action-oriented approach goes even further than this more developed form of TBLT, due to the fact that it is informed not only by communication theories and discourse analysis, but by multiple theories (e.g. communication, discourse, activity, phenomenology, sociocultural, and complexity theories). As a result, the action-oriented approach puts agency at the centre, encouraging users/learners to engage fully, perceive affordances and collaboratively co-construct meaning.

[85]Willis, D. & Willis, J. (2007). p. 99.

[86]Sánchez Cuadrado, A. (2021). Claves para operativizar la enseñanza de la mediación lingüística en el aula de español como lengua extranjera o segunda lengua. In C. Arrieta Castillo (Ed.), *Discurso, comunicación y gestión del aula de ELE*. Colección Ámbito-ELE. Madrid: enClave-ELE y Centro de Estudios Financieros.

4.2.2. Action-oriented scenarios

Action-oriented tasks are closer to projects as discussed above, and share many features of project pedagogy, for which reason they are often contextualised in a scenario:

> Scenarios are blueprints for projects and they contain one (or more) culminating, action-oriented tasks that provide the necessary coherence to the entire scenario. Users/learners are working towards a precise goal and each task implies the creation of some form of artefact (it can be a written or an oral text, or a multimedia product involving some other semiotic code(s), like pictures or graphics, etc.).[87]

A learning scenario will have a number (e.g., 3-6) of steps, each of which is a self-contained subtask, within the overall didactic sequence bonded together by the scenario itself and leading to a culminating task. Organizing the course around scenarios with culminating tasks also makes it possible to link teaching and classroom assessment right away. Plurilingual, action-oriented teaching organised around scenarios is becoming more common[88] and also informing materials development. Even in formal testing, scenario-based assessment is also becoming more widespread, as discussed later in Section 7.2.1.

Although most steps in a scenario will be meaning-focused tasks, some of them may be planned in advance to be form-focused, though very often the teacher will feed in new language as the need for it emerges, and then add on a form-focused session later for reinforcement. This is because learners are more likely to learn – and to remember – new language if: (a) it is relevant for meaningful self-expression, for something they are trying to do; (b) they perceive the need for it – and (c) they notice the form it takes.

An important aspect of the scenario approach is that, during the course of working on the tasks, the learners naturally employ *all* their linguistic and cultural resources in a plurilingual way. It will almost certainly be the case that the teacher has defined the language(s) in which the final product must be presented, as part of the constraints of the activity in order to give a clear goal, but users/learners have the liberty to decide how to get there, apart from when the teacher brings the class together for some relevant work on the target language(s).

4.2.3. Potential of the action-oriented approach

Action-orientation enables the integration of the teaching/learning of linguistic and pragmatic competences with real-life communicative situations, which fosters awareness among students. For teachers and students the action-oriented approach can be a way to make space for linguistic and cultural diversity, helping to break down the walls separating the classroom and real life and providing opportunities for learners to use all their languages and harness community resources in their task/projects. For teachers, it can also be a way of combining more classic textbook materials with more innovative pedagogies

[87] Piccardo, E., & North, B. (2019). *The action-oriented approach*: A dynamic vision of language education. Multilingual Matters, p. 272.

[88] Piccardo, E., Lawrence, G., Germain Rutherford, A., & Galante, A. (2022). *Activating linguistic and cultural diversity in the language classroom*. New York: Springer International Publishing.
Piccardo, E., & Langé G. (Eds.) (2023). La *Classe plurilingue. Insegnare con un approccio orientato all'azione.* Milano: Sanoma Pearson Academy
Léger, F., Lebrec, C., & Li, M. (2024). *La Francophonie en action*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars.

and a way into investigating core concepts of the CEFRCV such as social agency, mediation and plurilingualism.

CEFR descriptors can be used in this process for goal setting, designing tasks and scenarios, monitoring activity and teacher, peer and self-assessment. Above all, the collaborative nature of action-oriented tasks and scenarios helps create an inclusive classroom, as all learners are able to contribute to the work of their group, and leverage their whole linguistic repertoire in the process of brainstorming, planning and producing something together.

4.3. Teacher education and professional development

The CEFR/CEFRCV has considerable potential to spark innovation and reform in language education, as the participants in the Reflection Day mentioned in Section 1.2 confirmed. However, unfortunately, on top of the misinterpretations referred to in Section 4.1, there continues to be a serious lack of knowledge of the CEFR/CEFRCV, with little attention paid to it in either pre-service or in-service teacher education. Surveys carried out in 2016 and 2017[89] indicated that the CEFR was introduced in pre-service language teacher education in only approximately half the member states of the Council of Europe. As regards in-service training, actions aimed to disseminate knowledge of the CEFR/CEFRCV are not numerous or systematic, as was confirmed by the participants in the CEFRCV webinar series that took place from 2021 to 2023.

Finally, in both initial and in-service teacher education, even though attention is often given to interculturality, the monolingual mindset remains the norm; plurilingualism is seldom properly presented with teachers to be encouraged to think in terms of their own plurilingual repertoire.

Here below are some ideas on how to address these issues.

- CEFRCV Chapter 2, a 25-page illustrated text, gives a good overview of the CEFR vision that can be very useful in teacher education.
- Considering the theory behind the CEFRCV and reflecting on the vision of language learning and teaching that it represents is really a prerequisite to putting into practice the ideas it contains. In this respect, the CEFR website contains a wealth of materials both explaining the key concepts of the CEFRCV as well as ideas on how to implement them.
- To foster a plurilingual mindset, try and ensure that teachers of different languages receive their didactic training together to encourage a common approach and avoid separate pedagogic cultures for each language. Encourage (future) teachers to appreciate their own plurilingual repertoire and profile and include plurilingual

[89] 2016: part of the 2016-2018 ECML project CEFR-QualiMatrix: A quality assurance matrix for CEFR use; 2017: as part of the consultation with member states on the new descriptors developed for the CEFRCV.

activities (like language portraits;[90] intercomprehension,[91] linguistic landscaping[92]) in teacher education programmes.

- For the teaching practice in pre-service teacher education, ensure that the sending institution can select the host teachers and create a pool of experienced host teachers knowledgeable about the CEFR. One of the main reasons why achieving change is difficult is the way newly trained teachers are isolated, and quickly tend to conform to the practice of their older colleagues who have not necessarily received updated professional development opportunities.
- Encourage teachers to see themselves as professionals, to become aware of their own profile[93] and professional identity, and to see their competences as dynamic and developing throughout their career. This will help them appreciate that confidence in relation to concepts like action-orientation, mediation and plurilingualism develops over time and will sustain them in embarking on a process of continuous self/peer-development.
- Develop mentors: "champions of the CEFRCV," who have a trailblazing role in (a) trying out these new approaches that teachers might want to try but do not dare to, and (b) in showing that these approaches work.
- Teachers need steady access to training events on how to implement aspects of the CEFR with collaborative workshops on how to use it in their day-to-day work, plus sessions on the new descriptors, on designing tasks. Training works well when it is part of the overall teacher education programme spread over an academic year, in which teachers come to workshops and, between sessions, can collaborate to implement what they are learning, try things out and develop ideas further in their classes.
- Provide continuous professional development about the CEFR, including practical hands-on activities for participants to be able to really see and experience the implications of the key points of the CEFR pedagogic vision (action-orientation, plurilingualism, mediation). When introduced to the action-oriented approach, many teachers tend to continue with it, gradually discovering the related concepts

[90] Krumm, H-J., & Jenkins, E-M. (2001). *Kinder und ihre Sprachen – lebendige Mehrsprachigkeit: Sprachenportraits gesammelt und kommentiert von Hans-Jürgen Krumm*. Wien: Eviva.
Prasad, G. (2014). Portraits of plurilingualism in a French international school in Toronto: Exploring the role of visual methods to access students' representations of their linguistically diverse identities. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17, 51-77.
Busch, B. (2018). The language portrait in multilingualism research: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies*, *Vol. 236*.

[91] De Carlo, M., & Garbarino, S. (2022). Intercomprehension: Strengths and opportunities of a pluralistic approach. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford & G. Lawrence (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 337-359). London and New York: Routledge.

[92] Brinkmann, L. M., Duarte, J., & Melo-Pfeifer, S. (2022). Promoting plurilingualism through linguistic landscapes: A multi-method and multisite study in Germany and the Netherlands. *TESL Canada Journal, 38*(2), 88-112.

[93] In this respect a very useful tool is the ECML's European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL).

in the process of doing so. Encourage teachers to experiment, to undertake action research; to prepare materials for action-oriented scenarios.

- Focus attention on language awareness and on transferability from one language to another.
- Organise education on the language dimension for teachers of all subjects – including training on the importance of the concept of mediation.
- Include specific training on CEFR-informed assessment, with care to show the link between planning, teaching and assessment, as well as the difference between assessment and testing. Show (future) teachers how to use CEFRCV descriptors for ongoing assessment and for judging performances on tasks.
- Organise ways of sharing and collaboration (e.g., sharing experiences across contexts, creating communities of practice, linking secondary schools with higher education, crossing disciplines). A local hub/website to share training activities and examples of good practice between different institutions also helps to support local initiatives and networking, and can also be shared to a wider audience.

5. Curriculum design for action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural language education

The CEFRCV is above all an instrument intended to help users achieve appropriate direction to language education, providing guidance in the process of detailed planning at the national and institutional level of the curriculum, in the development of textbooks, at the level of the programme for a particular course, and also at the level of the immediate planning of didactic sequences designed by teachers for their own classes. Both the concepts contained in the CEFRCV (action-orientation, social agency, mediation, plurilingualism) and the descriptors for communicative activities, for communicative strategies and for communicative competences are useful in these processes at the different levels of planning.

The CEFR provides a framework that facilitates the use of the same metalanguage and overall approach for all languages taught in an institution, thus creating synergies for teachers and students alike. Secondly, for each language the descriptors offer a transparent way to align goal setting and planning (both curriculum and classroom level), teaching, and assessment (both classroom and more formal tests) into one coherent system. CEFR descriptors can help guide this integration process, which is often referred to as 'constructive alignment.' Finally, the metalanguage of categories and levels provides a basis for more effective networking between institutions in the same educational sector and between educational sectors.

This is of course within the context of the vision for the curriculum as a whole, well summarised in the Executive Summary of the 2016 *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*.

In the process of planning a curriculum, it is important to ensure that what is being proposed is relevant to the needs of each particular type of learner and that the overall principles of the curriculum are applied consistently – with flexibility according to local context. A checklist like the following can be a helpful reminder:[94]

1. **Why** are they learning? *learning goals*
2. **What** are they learning? *learning contents*
3. **How** are they learning? *learning activities and experiences*
4. **With what** are they learning? *resources & materials*
5. **When** are they learning? *time, scheduling*
6. **With whom** are they learning? *grouping*
7. **Where** are they learning? *learning environment*
8. **How is the teacher** facilitating their learning? *teacher role*
9. **How** is their learning assessed? *forms of assessment: as/for learning (formative); of learning (summative)*

[94] van den Akker, J. (2013). Curricular development research as a specimen of education design research. In T. Plomp & N. Nieveen (Eds.), *Educational design research* (pp. 52–71). Enschede, the Netherlands: SLO.

In considering these questions, the suggestions for pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary and vocational education outlined in Chapter 3 of the 2016 Guide mentioned above can also be useful.

5.1. The CEFRCV: A framework for the curriculum

The CEFRCV can act as a coherent framework that can be used to rethink the curriculum and establish (plurilingual) guidelines for a common understanding of language learning:

- inclusive language education, both plurilingual and pluricultural: stimulate learning of several languages and ensure all languages are considered an asset, including all the languages present in the classroom;
- coherence in the approach taken to the teaching of different languages, with an emphasis on showing understanding of similarities and differences between languages and of language variation, comparing features at the word, sentence and text level, recognizing patterns etc.), uses of language in different sociocultural contexts, and the subsequent development of students' plural metalinguistic awareness;
- learner agency, with students becoming aware of their own language learning process and their own language use inside and outside the classroom; learners are encouraged to take an active role;
- language teachers as facilitators, collaborating with other language teachers and teachers of other subjects.

A critical engagement with the CEFRCV's plurilingual and pluricultural vision of language learning and teaching and its view of the learner as a social agent, as an autonomous and responsible language user, is conditional to operationalise such essential concepts effectively. Implementing these concepts in the curriculum can help foster democratic values for citizenship. Languages are not only instruments to obtain and exchange information or to express ideas and opinions, but are also a means to discover and interpret the world and to build both individual and collective knowledge through interaction and dialogue. Specifically, mediation plays a fundamental role in this respect, not only as a tool for the language learning classroom, but also as a cross-curricular tool. The CEFRCV helps teachers and teacher educators to rethink the curriculum as a whole and to ensure the learners take an active role in their own learning.

The CEFRCV can also be used as a tool to establish real-life oriented, achievable objectives at the national, school and class levels. At a national level, the CEFRCV can encourage a dialogue on needs and goals of education – including interculturality, plurilingualism and the ability to see others' perspectives and mediate solutions, as well as to further develop language proficiency. It can help to produce a conscious rationale for language education – which is the first step in curriculum development – a rationale that assigns a central role to language education in promoting students' development into language-savvy, culture-aware and language-aware citizens who confidently participate in communication in multilingual contexts.

The CEFRCV framework can also inform the definition of national core objectives and attainment targets and, by aligning these to a common real-life oriented framework, and assessing student achievement in relation to a commonly understood external criterion. Documents produced can include a rationale, reference guides, the curriculum itself, and examinations. Finally, the extension of the CEFR to sign languages in the CEFRCV suggests not only that sign languages can be integrated into curriculum documents, but also gives a good example of multimodal language use that can inspire all other signed and non-signed languages. Including sign languages encourages us to broaden our reflection on codes that are intrinsically multimodal, to reflect on the fact that, in spoken languages, paralinguistic semiotics, from gaze and gesture to body language, also contribute to the construction of meaning in context.

At the school level, the CEFRCV can help inform the development of a conscious rationale for the school's local curriculum, for the selection of objectives and choices for activities and educational experiences offered. The CEFRCV descriptors can be exploited to develop learning pathways and monitor student achievements. The principal actors in such a development process will be teachers, school curriculum experts, principals, parents/guardians, and students. Documents produced can include school plans, the school curriculum, syllabi for different courses, and annual reports.

At the level of the class, the definition of objectives in a transparent manner can help the teacher to tailor the curriculum to the needs of their particular group of students and develop a learning programme for them, with the documents produced including course and lesson plans, teaching materials and assessment tools. Finally, at the individual level, the CEFRCV can inform the establishment of individual (plurilingual) profiles and learning pathways for different learners and groups of learners.

The descriptors can be exploited in various ways in this process. Here it is important to appreciate that there are two main types of descriptors in the CEFRCV that can be exploited to inform the definition of goals.

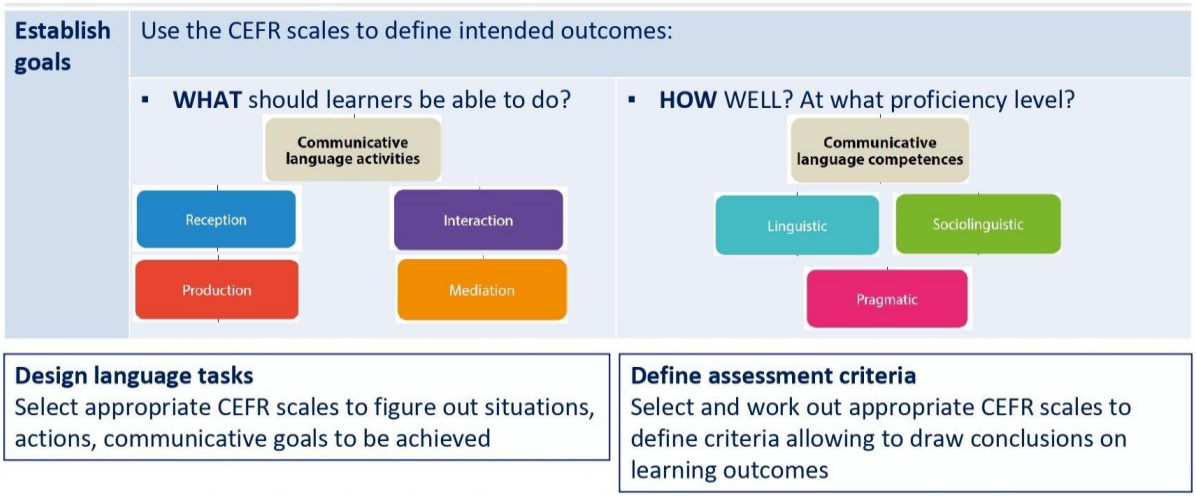

Figure 1. Exploiting the CEFRCV descriptors in curriculum design

As shown in Figure 1, there are descriptors for communicative language activities, which describe what learners should be able to do, and there are descriptors for communicative

language competences, which describe how well they will be expected to do that at the different proficiency levels. The former can be exploited in a needs analysis to select relevant, appropriate categories of activity for the type of learners concerned, and then to design tasks for teaching and for assessment; the latter can inform the definition of qualitative aspects of language use in assessment criteria.

To summarise, the CEFRCV descriptors offer a way to:

- relate learning aims to real-world language use, thus providing a framework for action-oriented learning;
- provide transparent "signposting" to learners and their parents/guardians;
- offer a "menu" to negotiate priorities with adult learners in a process of ongoing needs analysis;
- suggest classroom tasks to teachers that will involve activities described in several descriptors;
- introduce criterion-referenced assessment with criteria relating to an external framework, here the CEFR.

One point in relation to the use of the CEFR descriptors that needs to be highlighted is that they are intended to be used in a differentiated manner, both in terms of setting objectives and in terms of reporting individual proficiency. Proficiency levels need to be thought of in relation to the different, relevant communicative language activities – rather than as an across-the-board 'level'. Users/learners rarely need to have the exact same proficiency level in each of the different activities and this should be taken into account in analysing needs. In turn, reporting results in relation to different activities is very important in relation to assessment, as we will see in Chapter 7.

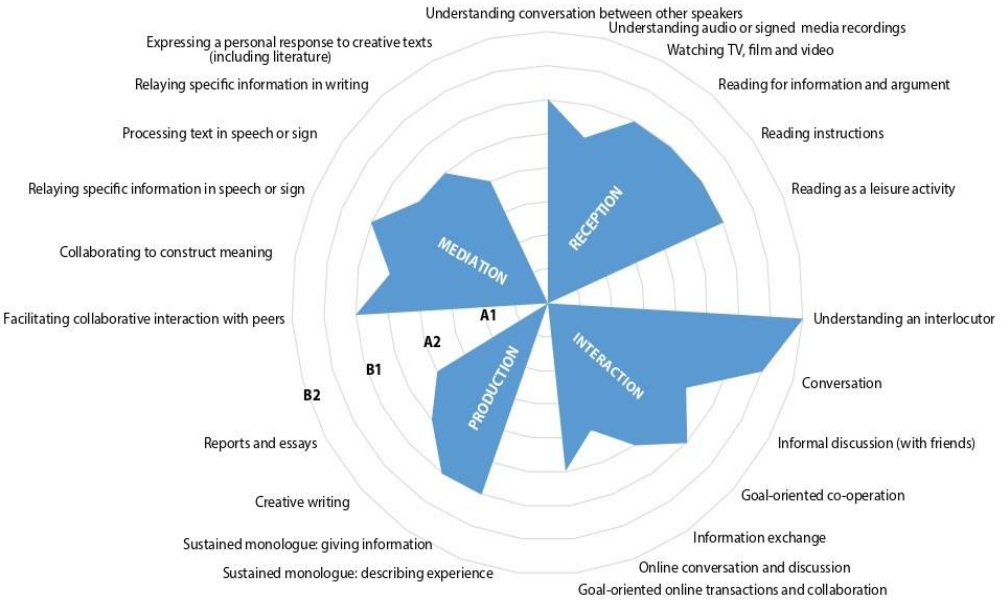

Figure 2. A fictional example of needs in an additional language - lower secondary CLIL[95]

The CEFRCV emphasises this point of differentiation, as exemplified by a graphic profile shown in Figure 2. As can be seen, the level required in the different kinds of language activities varies considerably. The CEFRCV also provides an example of a second type of profile – a plurilingual profile – shown in Figure 3.

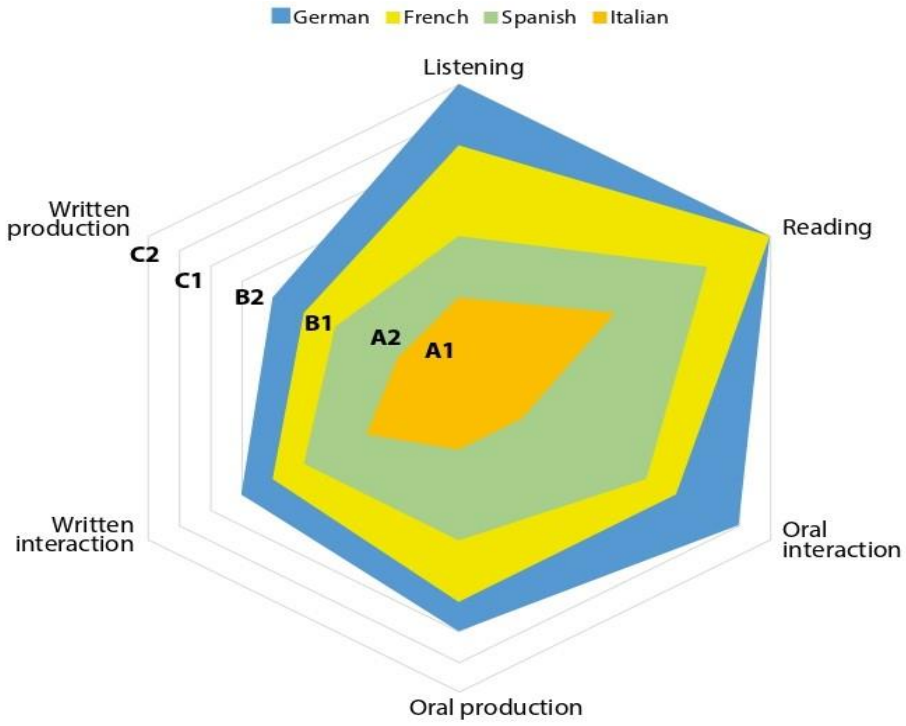

Figure 3. A graphic plurilingual profile[96]

Plurilingual profiles will vary considerably from person to person. This person, for example, shows a similar pattern across all languages, with reading stronger than writing. Another person might also show higher levels in reception than production for some languages but also a high proficiency level in writing in one or two languages in which they are more proficient.

5.2. Coherence in languages across the curriculum

Adopting the same CEFR-based approach to the teaching of the language of schooling and additional languages can greatly increase networking between teachers. It is increasingly recognised that, given the diversity present in today's classrooms, all teachers need to see themselves as language teachers. It is every teacher's task to support students in mastering functions and notions central to each subject, and in developing the language they need to participate fully in education and in society.[97] The role of the CEFR and its descriptors in this

[95] CECRCV Section 2.7, page 38.

[96] CECRCV Section 2.7, page 40.

[97] In this respect the *Handbook for curriculum development and teacher education: the language dimension in all subjects* can be very helpful.

process was already underlined by John Trim, the leader of the CEFR 2001 project at the 2007 intergovernmental Forum to take stock of CEFR implementation:

> "Most users of the CEFR have applied it only to a single language but its descriptive apparatus for communicative action and competences, together with the 'can-do' descriptors of levels of competence, are a good basis for a plurilinguistic approach to language across the curriculum, which awaits development."[98]

The promotion of an action-oriented approach to language education is an opportunity to introduce greater coherence and synergies between the teaching/learning of additional languages, regional/minority languages and the language of schooling. Experience with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) suggests that CLIL naturally involves action-oriented learning scenarios that interrelate with other subject matters and the world outside the classroom, and that CLIL can benefit from the use of CEFR descriptors for goal-setting and self-assessment.[99] This suggests that an action-oriented approach can lend itself well to the teaching/learning of the language dimension in content subjects. After all, an action-oriented approach is not confined to the CEFR or language education. When the CEFR 2001 was published, articles promoting an action-oriented approach to other subjects were also being published,[100] and soon afterwards Leo van Lier wrote a seminal article on the subject in 2007.[101]

The CEFR and action-oriented approach, as well as other project-based pedagogies, offer the means to make the various language courses in the curriculum more cohesive, for instance in teaching methods and in the terminology employed. A consistent approach to tasks, the acquisition of learning, communication strategies and language content helps learners to make connections and progress more easily, with the added benefit of showing them the extent to which content or techniques learnt in one learning situation can often be used in others, thus promoting learner autonomy.

Furthermore, one core issue is the place and role of students' home languages in the school environment. The CEFR/CEFRCV promotes opening to other languages and the valorisation of even very limited language proficiency. A positive and respectful approach that values learners' personal linguistic and social profiles is the first step to foster a more inclusive education which makes space for the students' languages of origin. More importantly, all

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[98] Trim, J. L. M. (2007) The CEFR in relation to the policy aim of the Council of Europe. In Council of Europe (2007) (Ed.) *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities.* Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum, Strasbourg, 6-8 February 2007, Report (pp. 50–51). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[99] See, for example: Abbate, E. (2022). Application of Companion Volume descriptors in CLIL settings. In B. North, E. Piccardo, T. Goodier, D. Fasoglio, R. Margonis, & B. Rüschoff (Eds.), *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion Volume in practice* (pp. 155-168). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

[100] For example: Koo, L. C. (1999). *Learning action learning. Journal of Workplace Learning, 11(3), 89-94. Lindemann, H. J. (2002). The principle of action-oriented learning*. In *GIZ (Eds..), Linking German TVET with Anglo-Saxon CBET,* International Workshop. Weimar ua: *GTZ*.

[101] van Lier, L. (2007). Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity. *Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning, 1*(1). 1–19.

languages in the students' repertoires should be seen as assets that can be leveraged for awareness-raising and more effective learning.

Adopting a coherent approach to languages across the curriculum is a means to raise students' metalinguistic awareness of the fundamental characteristics of languages and the similarities and differences between languages. If language teachers encourage comparisons between and reflection on languages – with a positive focus on similarities – learners are better able to leverage their existing linguistic repertoire, including home languages and/or the language of schooling, enhancing their ability to learn and enabling them to 'cut corners' in learning what for them is a new language.

It is important to emphasise that CEFR/CEFRCV descriptors have value in relation to the language of schooling, particularly for students from minority groups and those with a migration background. The lower-level descriptors can be adapted to facilitate linguistic integration into the class. At higher levels (Level B2 onwards) they include cognitive and academic skills and can therefore further support the development of the language of schooling. The descriptors for online interaction, mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural and communicative language strategies are relevant for both CLIL and the language of schooling. In addition, as mentioned in Section 2.1.6, descriptors for the language of schooling have been offered by several member states and some ECML projects, which can help to address gaps.[102]

5.3. Integrating mediation into the curriculum

Following the conceptualisation of mediation in the CEFRCV and the provision of a wealth of descriptors for different kinds of mediation,[103] ministries, curriculum developers, publishers and teachers in many countries are considering how to include mediation in their programme.

As mentioned above in Section 4.1, when it is first presented, mediation is sometimes perceived as being 'difficult' and/or 'superfluous', as it involves the other modes of communication (reception, production, interaction). Mediation may seem to 'complicate' people's work. It is therefore often misunderstood and reduced to translation (at university as well as school level) when it instead concerns the construction of meaning. Questions also arise as to whether mediation always has to involve two languages, rather than one, and whether it can or should be assessed.

Mediation is a transversal activity – relevant to the teaching of all languages and indeed other subjects. Mediation competence acquired in relation to one language is easily transferred to another. But mediation is above all a process of verbalising thoughts, ideas and new information: of constructing meaning through language activities; this is what makes it so relevant to the language class. The 2022 publication *Enriching 21st century*

[102] See the Language of Schooling page of the Platform and the ECML project Language skills for successful subject learning

[103] CEFRCV Section 3.4.

language education: The CEFR Companion volume in practice provides a number of accounts by teachers of such application of mediation in the classroom.

Implementing mediation in relation to one single language requires taking a fresh look at activities that are not unfamiliar to teachers. For instance, in communicative activities, learners sometimes summarise for others the content of texts and other source materials or pass on specific information, (CEFRCV scales: 'Processing texts;' 'Relaying specific information;' 'Explaining data'). In small group tasks, they help along the work of the group (CEFRCV scales: 'Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers') and, with problem-solving tasks, build on each other's thoughts and ideas (CEFRCV: 'Collaborating to construct meaning'). Sometimes, working alone, learners mediate a text for themselves (CEFRCV: 'Note-taking'); sometimes they say what they think of a story, poem, film or literary text (CEFRCV: 'Expressing a personal response to creative texts') or, at higher levels, they critically analyse and interpret a literary work (CEFRCV: 'Analysis and criticism of creative texts').

The issue here is that the provision of descriptors helps frame these activities. Students may not automatically know how to act effectively in a group – or what to focus on when talking about a creative text. Using the descriptors for goal setting and self-assessment can substantially raise students' awareness and so improve performance, as testified in piloting and case studies.[104] Collaborative group work also increases the sources of mediation, since, for a learner, mediating for another is "an opportunity to verbalise, clarify and extend their own knowledge of the subject matter."[105]

The most familiar and most widely implemented mediation activities are those that were already included in the CEFR 2001. They are listed in the CEFRCV under the category *Mediating a text* ('Processing texts;' 'Relaying specific information;' 'Explaining data') and the third CEFRCV descriptor scale under *Mediating communication*, 'Acting as an intermediary in informal situations,' which reflects part of the CEFR 2001 definition of mediation as making "communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly."[106] Note here that the reason for lack of understanding is not only linguistic, it could very well be cultural, as also reflected in the descriptors, or simply due to a lack of familiarity with the situation or topic concerned.

Both *Mediating a text* and 'Acting as an intermediary in informal situations' have been incorporated into curricula since the 2000s (e.g. in Greece, Germany and Switzerland), with a focus on cross-linguistic mediation, and further developed, based on the CEFRCV, in the 2020-2023 ECML project Mediation in teaching, learning and assessment (METLA), which includes classroom materials together with a *Teaching Guide*.[107] Mediation can in fact be perceived as an enabling precondition for the construction and understanding of meaning

[104] See *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion volume in practice*.

[105] Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: A conceptual framework, *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 9*(2), 159-180 - p. 168.

[106] CEFR 2001, p.14.

[107] Stathopoulou, M., Gauci, P, Liontou, M., & Melo-Pfeifer, S. (2023). *Mediation in teaching, learning & assessment (METLA): A teaching guide for language educators.* Strasbourg/Graz: Council of Europe Publishing.

and thus for plurilingual and intercultural education. The introduction of such cross-linguistic mediation has contributed to the use of languages other than the target language in the foreign language classroom, particularly the language of schooling, but also home languages.

Tasks reflecting 'Acting as an intermediary in informal situations' are included in many textbooks and examinations for additional languages, for instance in Germany. Although presented as individual tasks in the exams, they are very often used to design roleplays in the textbooks, in which one student acts as an intermediary. Some typical situations are:[108]

- mediating at the doctor's for a family member, who has hurt themselves on holiday;
- mediating in a conversation between their parents and a foreign exchange student;
- mediating between a tourist and a salesperson in a shop;
- mediating between their own family and a family speaking another language, whom they meet on holiday;
- mediating for an immigrant family who can speak English, and who need to talk to the landlord in the language of schooling.

Such activities can be used in a strategy to develop language awareness and intercultural competence.[109] Students are reported to appreciate the authenticity of the contextualisation, the metalinguistic and intercultural reflection with the teacher (with regard to similarities and differences), and the fact that they acquire more awareness of the role of communicative language strategies as a way of avoiding misunderstandings.[110]

Under the category *Mediating communication* there are also two descriptor scales ('Facilitating pluricultural space' and 'Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements') which are less familiar to teachers. The activities included in these scales are very relevant to education for democratic citizenship, and can both happen in just one language – even though each activity involves an element of plurality and/or intercultural competence – or in more than one language. There is in fact a strong (inter-)cultural element in all forms of mediation. The CEFR 2001 had included mediation in its descriptive scheme, without developing the concept beyond mediation as informal transcoding between languages. Soon after, three complementary aspects of intercultural mediation were proposed, which would later influence the development of the CEFRCV mediation descriptors, mainly for *Mediating communication*:

- mediation as an area for bringing together new partners. Mediators make intelligible to newcomers the cultural and linguistic contexts which the latter inaugurate;

[108] A further list of situations is given in the METLA Guide, page 17.

[109] Katelhön, P., & Nied Curcio, M. (2013). Sprachmittlung - die vernachlässigte Kompetenz in der DaF-Didaktik? Theoretische und sprachpraktische Uberlegungen zur Sprachmittlung in der Germanistik an italienischen Universitäten. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, *50*, 150-158.

[110] Nied Curcio, M. (2017): Sprachmittelnde Aktivitäten im akademischen DaF-Unterricht in Italien – aus der Sicht der Studierenden. In: Moroni, M.C. & Ricci Garotti, F. (Eds.): *Brücken Schlagen Zwischen Sprachwissenschaft und Daf-Didaktik* (pp. 77-94) Bern/Berlin: Peter Lang.

- mediation in situations of conflict or tension, where languages and cultural references lead to exclusion and social violence. Different situations of re-mediation will be presented within a process which begins by specifying the object of the conflict, to go on to establishing a procedure for possible conflict settlement;
- mediation instilling specific dynamics into third areas as alternatives to linguistic and cultural confrontation. In this plural area difference is pinpointed, negotiated and adapted.[111]

The first and third points are reflected in the descriptors for 'Facilitating pluricultural space' while the second point is addressed in those for 'Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements.' It is important to develop learners' capacity for reflective expression about 'Otherness' to develop an attitude of openness and interculturality.[112]

Since the publication of the CEFR 2001, reflection on including mediation activities in the curriculum has continued, as shown in the section written by Francis Goullier in the 2016 Guide referred to above.[113] Below, the points raised by Goullier are related to relevant CEFRCV descriptor scales, which are given in brackets:

- The ability to manage linguistic and cultural communication in a context of otherness ('Facilitating pluricultural space'), leading to conflict resolution skills and the ability to overcome obstacles and misunderstandings, as well as mediating, negotiating and adaptation skills ('Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements').
- The ability to construct and expand a pluralistic linguistic and cultural repertoire ('Building on plurilingual repertoire;' 'Building on pluricultural repertoire'), including the ability to draw on one's own intercultural and interlinguistic experiences ('Facilitating pluricultural space'), and the ability to put into practice, in a context of otherness, more systematic and controlled learning.
- The ability to move outside oneself, to give meaning to unfamiliar linguistic and/or cultural elements, to distance oneself – take a perspective on one's own culture ('Building on pluricultural repertoire').
- The capacity for a critical analysis of the situation and of the (communicative and/or learning) activities in which one is engaged.
- The ability to recognise the Other ('Building on pluricultural repertoire').

[111] Zarate, G. (2003). Identities and plurilingualism: Preconditions for the recognition of intercultural competences. In M. Byram (Ed.), *Intercultural competence* (pp. 84–117). Strasbourg: Council of Europe - p. 95.

[112] See North, B. (in press). Developing an action-oriented perspective on mediation: The new CEFR descriptors. In B. Dendrinos (Ed.) *Mediation as negotiation of meanings, plurilingualism and language education.* London / New York: Routledge.

[113] Beacco et al., (2016). p. 58.

5.4. Recommendations for successful CEFR-informed curriculum reform

Educational change is notoriously slow and difficult, and often fails to achieve the desired impact unless care is taken at multiple levels.[114] Curriculum reform is a complex process that requires both top-down and bottom-up leadership across the different levels, since a curriculum does not really exist before it is enacted in practice. Practitioners and policy makers need each other and influence each other. Therefore it makes sense to involve teachers – and actors at all levels – early in the process of developing a new curriculum. It is equally important to raise policy makers' awareness of the CEFRCV approach and ensure that all key players involved in the process of the development and implementation of a curriculum change have thoroughly engaged with the vision of the CEFRCV and its key concepts.[115] Critical engagement with the rationale and the key concepts of the CEFRCV is crucial for effective and sustainable implementation, and to enhance cooperation and sense-making.

Since examples of the action-oriented approach, plurilingual practices and mediation activities are not yet common in textbooks, putting the key concepts of the CEFRCV into practice can be a big challenge for teachers and materials developers. Experience in several countries suggests that the chances of successful, sustainable implementation of the CEFRCV's action-oriented, plurilingual and pluricultural approach in the curriculum are significantly increased if points like the following are considered:

- analyse and take into account the requirements, possibilities and constraints (e.g., levels of expertise, resources available) in the particular context(s); align the competences prominent in the local curriculum with the CEFR and aims of action-oriented, plurilingual and pluricultural education and integrate CEFR concepts in it, with the message that using CEFR descriptors for teaching goals and assessment gives a practical orientation;
- have multiple entry points (e.g. redesign curricula with a focus on action-orientation; develop new coursebooks, or adapt/supplement existing ones; develop new tests; introduce continuous professional development programmes) and ensure networking between the persons involved in each of these aspects;
- get all stakeholders on board, share the rationale for changes in the curriculum with all people involved at all levels; support it with research findings, including action-research projects in which teachers have been involved; ensure an adequate coordination and communication structure that includes all roles at all levels of schooling affected;
- involve a large number of teachers and teacher trainers from the outset of the curriculum reform project, train head teachers, heads of departments and teacher

[114] See, e.g., Timperley, H., & Parr, J. (2005). Theory competition and the process of change. *Journal of Educational Change, 6*(3), 227-251

[115] A self-evaluation tool, the ECML QualiMatrix project, can be very helpful for teachers, curriculum developers and administrators who are engaging in curriculum reform informed by CEFR principles. In addition to the QualiMatrix Tool, the website also contains case studies of promising practices in implementation of aspects of the CEFR.

trainers and approach other stakeholders who will act as multipliers in a cascade design;

- Design a curriculum innovation that is challenging enough so that teachers find it worthwhile, but also achievable so that they are not discouraged. Phase the implementation, distinguishing between what is realisable in the short term, and what is the long-term goal on the horizon. A sudden break with the current situation could generate a lot of resistance from various parties.
- allow time for changes to be understood, experimented with and implemented; increase the timescale significantly from first thoughts. Possibly plan the project in a modular way, in self-contained phases, rather than trying to do everything at once;
- provide training that helps teachers to understand the four modes of communication (reception, production, interaction, and mediation), so that teachers will be able to perceive mediation as *construction of meaning* – as opposed to just exchange (reception and production combined) or negotiation of meaning (like in interaction); the shift from the four skills to four modes which include mediation is a very big step to understand;
- make innovative CEFR concepts such as the action-oriented approach, mediation, and the integration of plurilingualism in the classroom concrete by providing examples of learning activities; collect and disseminate good practice experiences (e.g., from other contexts) and demonstrate, preferably again with examples, how they are central to or at least compatible with the curriculum;
- provide guidelines that help teachers adapt example materials to their context and develop their own materials, particularly when it comes to mediation;
- create a project website that (a) holds examples of collaborative, plurilingual tasks that help teachers to translate the action-oriented approach into their practice and (b) can be used to give news of developments, and organise awareness-raising events for parents and guardians on the advantages of plurilingualism;
- clarify which aspects should be assessed and which other (e.g. plurilingual practices, mediation) should be encouraged and monitored but not assessed, and provide example assessment tasks that follow an action-oriented approach and have CEFR-based assessment criteria;
- provide ongoing professional development, not just limited to an information session, but with a series of practical workshops; an effective approach is 'sandwich style': a) workshop; b) try out at school; c) workshop to share experience; d) try out further at school; e) sharing and dissemination through a conference, a publication.

6. Creating (digitally-mediated) collaborative learning environments

The world has become a networked and networking plurilingual and pluricultural communicative space. As far as real-world professional practices are concerned, increasing flexibility in arranging and managing a multitude of working spaces has become the norm, ranging from using an office at the workplace to home office arrangements and online collaborative work assisted by telecollaborative tools, e.g. videoconferencing. Such realities also require different interactional competences that need to be addressed in language education. All this has led applied linguists and language educationalists to critically reflect on phenomena associated with enhancing effective communicative practices at the societal level as well as at the personal and professional levels while maintaining linguistic diversity. The CEFR recognises the distinct characteristics of the types of agency language users need to effectively interact in digital environments.[116]

Considering the above, there has been a constant debate on how to best make use of digital technologies in the language classroom and on the actual role of digitally-mediated learning when focusing on inclusion and democratic citizenship in language education. As far as digitally-mediated language learning is concerned the value of the CEFRCV is reflected by the materials provided by the CEFRCV case study volume *Enriching 21st Century Language Education*. This volume provides a wide range of examples that show how action-oriented language learning is enriched by digitally-enhanced teaching and learning practices, and vice-versa.

- The CEFRCV with its descriptors addressing online interaction and communication in digital spaces, synchronous as well as asynchronous, providing a solid grounding to inform the creation and use of digitally-mediated collaborative learning environments aimed at fostering agencies needed in digitally-mediated contexts.
- Reflections concerning inclusion and democratic citizenship have become most relevant due to the immediate impact on language education of emerging and rapidly progressing artificial intelligence (AI), particularly Large Language Model (LMM) driven systems like ChatGPT.
- In current discourses concerning second/additional language learning, it has become accepted that materials used and activities undertaken in the classroom need to be firmly rooted in real-world contexts.
- Designing learning environments in which learners can exercise their agency in situated, social practice is most fruitful when informed by action-oriented approaches and activities.

6.1. The CEFRCV descriptors for online interaction

In today's world, normalization of digital tools is a fact of social life and communicative

[116] Council of Europe (2020), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume,* Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

practice. Real-world relevance and real-world grounded learning practices, both key ingredients of action-oriented classroom practice, necessitate the integration of a variety of tools and flexibility in using a range of learning spaces including face-to-face and remote learning. The CEFRCV – seeing learners as social agents – has developed a clearly defined set of descriptors for competences needed in online interaction, goal-oriented collaboration and transactions. Furthermore, as action-oriented language classrooms are very much focused on real-world relevance, digital tools are in the process of becoming an essential ingredient in language learning. Thus, the CEFRCV is a valuable point of reference also in light of more recent and potentially emerging social, political, and interactional realities, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Furthermore, in an increasingly globalised world with digitally and media enhanced networking as well as new constructs of (digital/AI-impacted) realities, humans are consciously and subconsciously impacted by linguistic diversity and diversity in social interaction, interactional spaces and realities. More than ever before, it has become essential to reflect and discuss suggestions as to how digital realities can and must become an integral part of action-oriented language learning.

6.2. Agency-focussed digital learning

The CEFRCV recognizes that language learning needs to prepare learners to act in real-life situations, which is best achieved by an action-oriented approach that puts the co-construction of meaning at the centre of the learning and teaching process. Digitally-assisted learning, which draws on the potential of tools and modes of interaction and collaboration that by their very nature are real-world related and flexible in their use, is a key ingredient of action-oriented and agency-focussed learning. Using digital tools addresses most of the key characteristics of such an approach (e.g., authenticity, output orientation, competence orientation, self-directed, collaborative knowledge construction, flexibility in classroom participation and interaction, and flexibility in time and space). This makes it possible to connect the physical classroom learning spaces and interactional contexts beyond the classroom, including learning spaces and learning partners in the real-world.

When offering more flexible learning arrangements, teachers need to be conscious of the key role of 'social participation' in remote and hybrid language learning, and offer an effective balance between whole class work and interactive-collaborative remote sequences. This includes group activities and tasks that encourage socialisation and peer language learning.

6.3. Using real world apps and digital tools in the classroom

Learners make use of a wide range of apps and digital tools in their daily lives. These include social media apps that are used to chat, meet and network with others, and to share personal experiences via picture, sound, and videos. In addition to such apps (i.e. texting apps, photo and video sharing apps, or microblogging apps) numerous apps initially used in professional contexts have found their way into the language classroom. Apps such as Padlet or Stormboard to support online collaboration when brainstorming and sharing concepts and opinions, or Mentimeter or Kahoot to collaboratively survey and reflect on a topic at hand, are also increasingly used in educational practices. These have the potential to create more flexible, action-oriented learning scenarios that foster interactional and

communicative agency relevant in everyday life and work. Educational stakeholders need to encourage teachers to develop their learners' relevant digital interactional skills by using and familiarizing learners with a variety of language teaching/learning activities and resources that include apps, games, video materials etc. This can be done by creating language learning tasks on apps learners are already familiar with. This also implies careful critical reflection of the exact purpose and potential challenges of tools and apps. Experiences made with flexible, hybrid and blended-learning arrangements during the COVID pandemic suggest that both teachers and learners have become more appreciative of the creative and innovative potential of digitally-mediated learning practices.[117] This includes a greater openness towards action-oriented language education as key to adapting classroom practices to address the evolving needs created by current and future changes in interactional practices in every-day life.[118]

6.4. The promise of Artificial Intelligence

Rarely has an emerging digital development impacted everyday life and education in such a way as AI and LLMs seem to be doing. Affordances, challenges, and dangers have become the subject of debate almost from day one of the launch of systems such as ChatGPT and other open AI applications.

As far as promises and affordances of AI are concerned, such systems, if intelligently used, can help education to facilitate inclusive learning and managing diversity and heterogeneity in language education. What is required are initiatives in initial and further teacher education that raise educators' awareness as to intelligent and knowledge-driven approaches to using AI and LLMs. In addition, actors at all levels, but particularly those concerned with curriculum development and materials design, need to address the challenges resulting from current and constantly evolving AI applications.

Options to make use of AI include, for example, drawing on tools that assist in adapting materials for specific target groups or, in case of heterogeneity and diversity, in creating several versions of a given text, or different tasks to use with the same text, in order to cater for different learner profiles. AI might also include specific linguistic and cultural considerations in plurilingual settings. It is conceivable that AI-driven applications might soon be able to build "plurilingual bridges" into target language materials, e.g. by drawing learners' attention to aspects relating to their plurilingual repertoires when for example processing a text.

Teachers also need the agency to use AI assistance in assessment and evaluation in a just and valid manner. Furthermore, using AI as a resource in action-oriented learning scenarios necessitates the ability of teachers to offer learners the opportunity to benefit from AI assistance while at the same time experiencing and reflecting the need for intelligent and knowledge-driven ways of using such assistance.

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[117] Rossner, R., & Hayworth, F. (Eds). (2023). *Rethinking language education after the experience of COVID: final report*. Council of Europe Publishing.

[118] Rüschoff, B. (2024). The future of language education in the light of COVID: A European survey project on lessons learned and ways forward. In S. Goertler & J. Gleason (Eds.), *Technology- mediated crisis response in language studies*. Sheffield: Equinox.

As to the impact of AI and LLMs on digital realities and digital educational spaces – present and future – both teachers and learners need to be empowered to critically reflect on the validity of AI-generated content. The agency to critically reflect on the potentials and dangers posed by AI and LLMs is best acquired in both teacher-guided and self-directed learning activities.

Content generated by LLMs can be problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the LLM can only draw on the data set with which it has been trained and this data set will heavily reflect the dominant culture and its notions of normality. This fact inevitably leads to biases: families will tend to have a father, mother, a boy and girl and a dog/cat; names, in English, will tend to reflect white, Anglo culture; situational contexts will be predominantly middle class. Of course one could 'correct' these biases by stipulating what kind of identity and context should be portrayed. But that does not solve the problem: the bias will now be to the identity/context of choice; materials still will not reflect diversity. Secondly, LLM generated content is not deterministic: it does not draw from a logically organised database based on facts. Rather, it pulls together an answer to the prompt from what it has found in its data on the issue concerned. It may well not answer exactly in the same way two times running and the answer it gives is prone to the limitations in and the bias of its data.

Hence, LLM generated data should be a starting point, an initial draft that should be critically examined, compared to other sources of knowledge, discussed and corrected as necessary. This is true for teachers creating materials as well as for learners using an LLM for researching a topic. In relation to the latter, training learners in critical, knowledge-based exploitation of LLMs can be a key contribution to fostering democratic citizenship in language education. It will raise learners' critical-reflective competences, which will stand them in good stead when confronted in life with deep fakes and misleading, so-called alternative facts. The arrival of AI has led to new pluridigital "realities", and fostering pluridigital awareness will surely become one of the key aims of (language) education.

6.5. Impact on professional development[119]

Teaching and learning along the lines discussed in this chapter require changes in professional development in order to equip language teachers to align aims and outcomes with different options for lesson design that integrate a variety of learning spaces. Initial and continuing teacher education needs to include the following key areas:

- teachers' need to understand the educational processes and the digital competences required to learn and teach successfully;
- their appreciation of the importance of digital skills and of being able to use a range of both general, real-world, and specifical educational software and applications;
- their ability to redesign or adapt approaches to education and ways of

[119] Note: This section draws on the recommendations that resulted from the 2022 ECML survey on the effects of the move to online learning caused by the Colcid-19 epidemic. See Rossner, R., & Heyworth, F. (Eds). (2023). *Rethinking language education after the experience of COVID: final report*. Council of Europe Publishing.

implementing them in an agile and imaginative way in response to future developments and changes in digital realities and socio-professional contexts and practices;

- their willingness to select wisely from a broader and deeper range of alternatives in their teaching and learning; and above all
- their ability to themselves adopt a critical perspective towards digital realities and possibilities and particularly their ability to develop their learners' critical-reflective competences in this regard.

Fostering such a construct of educational agency and adaptability in both teacher professionalization and learning practice addresses the ability of teachers to effectively use a very wide range of options in their teaching, and the ability of learners to take advantage of these richer and more varied opportunities in their language learning and in learning how to learn. Such an agency – geared at fostering more flexibility and action-orientation – includes deciding on how to use and combine a variety of learning spaces (in class and beyond) and appropriately exploiting a variety of digital tools and resources, while competently managing the resulting diversity of learning spaces and interactions. It also implies regarding learners as social agents and as digital plurilingual and intercultural citizens/learners, thus fostering their agency and competences to become effective and responsible participants in democratic life.

7. Assessment in action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural language education

Section 3.2.5 outlined the way in which the predominant culture of standardized testing is an obstacle to moving forwards with language education. The power of these tests seems to increase constantly with them being introduced earlier and earlier in the child's school career. Teaching to the test takes up large amounts of valuable time in many educational systems and inculcates in the students a distorted understanding of the nature of both language and education. In addition, the constrained format of test tasks causes mainly negative washback / backwash on the teaching approach, trapping teachers and learners in counter-productive practices. It is very difficult to successfully implement action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education if the testing regime remains unchanged.

Unfortunately, the CEFR is, as mentioned in Section 4.1, often just associated with high stakes tests. This is particularly ironic since one major aim of providing CEFR descriptors is to facilitate an alternative to standardized tests by promoting more transparency and coherence to teacher assessment, as well as giving a basis for peer and self-assessment.

As regards classroom assessment, perhaps the most demotivating aspect is the still quite widespread practice of giving grades by counting mistakes. This reveals a deficiency-oriented perspective, which foregrounds rigid comparison to an idealized 'native speaker' norm in which perfection rather than action is the key. Actually, it is precisely the range and complexity of language that a learner tries to use which is, in the long term, more significant for making progress than the mistakes the learner makes. Research in English, French, German and Finnish has shown that improvement of accuracy is not linear: it is natural for the proportion of mistakes to rise around B1 as the user/learner struggles to formulate more complex language;[120] the big jump in accuracy occurs between B2 and C1 (the difference between C1 and C2 being more a case of the sophistication of syntax, vocabulary and semantic associations).[121]

Whatever kind of assessment is involved, one important issue is to report results as a profile across different categories. Such feedback is useful from a diagnostic point of view for the user/learner themselves, helping them to set new goals. Even more fundamentally, it represents a far truer picture of the user/learner's capabilities and may well be relevant in official settings, for example in relation to immigration and citizenship. The Council of

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[120] For example:
German: Klein W. (1986). *Second language acquisition,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. p. 108.
English: Fulcher, G. (1993) *The construction and validation of rating scales for oral tests in English as a Foreign Language*. PhD thesis, University of Lancaster.
Fulcher, G. (1996). Does thick description lead to smart tests? A data-based approach to rating scale construction *Language Testing, 13*(2), 208–238.
French: Forsberg, F., & Bartning, I. (2010). Can linguistic features discriminate between the communicative CEFR-levels? A pilot study of written L2 French. In I. Bartning, M. Martin & I. Vedder, I. (Eds.), *Communicative proficiency and linguistic development: Intersections between SLA and language testing research* (pp.133–158). Eurosla Monographs Series, 1, European Second Language Association.
Finnish: Martin, M., Mustonen, S., Reiman, N., & Seilonen, M. (2010). On becoming an independent user. In I. Bartning, M. Martin & I. Vedder (Eds.), (pp. 57–80).

[121] This is one of the overall findings of the *English Profile* project.

Europe's 2009 Manual for relating language examinations to the CEFR recommended reporting the contents of the examination as a profile, giving the profile of the requirements of a Belgian examination for immigrants as an example.[122] This examination required Level A2+ in listening and reading, but only A2 for the other sections of the test. A profile of this kind can equally be used to report individual results for any kind of assessment.

7.1. Integrating assessment and learning

The 1990s, at the time the CEFR was developed, saw radical developments in assessment/testing. Both in Europe and North America, people began to contest the power of tests and the disconnect between teaching and testing, with books appearing that had titles like 'Beyond testing;' 'A practical guide to alternative assessment;' 'Current developments and alternatives in language assessment'; 'Alternative language assessment;' 'Assessment for learning: Beyond the black box,' etc. The latter, by the Cambridge University 'Assessment Reform Group' (ARG),[123] made the distinction between assessment *of* learning – summative, but could be assessment by the teacher as well as a standardized test – and assessment *for* learning, which can be both formative (to gather information during the teaching/learning process) and diagnostic (to gather information before the teaching/learning process starts in order to better respond to students' needs).

The ARG themselves commented that research showed that successful use of information from assessment in order to improve learning involves five factors:

- the provision of effective feedback to pupils;
- the active involvement of pupils in their own learning;
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;
- a recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial influences on learning;
- the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve. [124]

A distinction has also been made between assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning, the latter generally seeing students as self-regulating: i.e., monitoring, reflecting on and peer/self-assessing their own learning, and in so doing learning more about themselves as learners. The idea is to help learners to understand, interpret and act upon feedback, and so exercise their agency and decide their next step(s). This fits completely

[122] Form A23 in Council of Europe (2009). *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 33.

[123] Assessment Reform Group. (1999). *Assessment for learning: Beyond the black box*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, School of Education.

[124] Assessment Reform Group. (1999), p. 5.

with the action-oriented philosophy of feedback and feedforward in dynamic learning situations that are rich in affordances:

> An iterative process of drafting or rehearsal is advisable because people do not manage a masterly performance first time around. For the same reason, assessment in earlier phases should take the form of feedback and feedforward, encouraging attempts to use more complex language, not discouraging linguistic experimentation by penalising error. This may well require a radical shift of emphasis in the assessment culture of the institution, away from marks towards the creation of artefacts that learners can be proud of, perhaps building on the concepts of identity texts and language portfolios. [125]

The CEFR descriptors can be exploited to make each of these three types of assessment (assessment *for*, assessment *as*, and assessment *of* learning) more relevant to the particular learners and to provide the tools to support self-regulation.

It is worth noting that it has long been recognised in language testing, at least in theory, that the same features which make a good classroom task will also make a good assessment task.[126] This is because, according to a currently popular theory of validity[127] shown in Figure 4, both classroom tasks and tests must be, a priori, based on theory (such as that outlined in Section 3.1) and appropriate in the specific context concerned. If a task is not based on what we know about the construct(s) concerned from theory, how can it be valid? If it is not shown to be appropriate for the context, or not related to the content of the course, how can it be valid? In addition, an assessment task or procedure should also have validity in relation to what happens afterwards (a posteriori): the scoring (related to reliability), the consequences for individuals concerned and society at large, and the dependability of any reporting onto external criteria like the CEFR, if this is done.

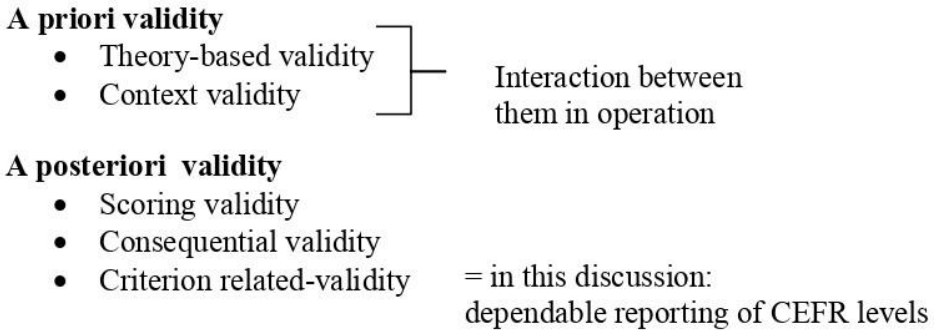

Figure 4. Weir's validity model[128]

This applies to all forms of assessment, summative or formative, monolingual or plurilingual, through a test or through continuous assessment by the teacher, though naturally the degree of rigour one would expect depends on the stakes involved (e.g., high

[125] Piccardo, E., & North, B. (2019). *The action-oriented approach: A dynamic vision of language education.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters, p. 280.

[126] Alderson, J. C. A., Clapham, C., & Wall, D. (1995) *Language test construction and evaluation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 40-41.

[127] Weir, C. (2005). *Language testing and validation: An evidence-based approach.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[128] North, B. (2014). The CEFR in practice. Cambridge University Press, p. 158.

stakes test: lots of statistical analysis; teacher's half-term grade: principled application with some form of quality control procedure; peer assessment of performance in a mediation task: a considered judgement based on the given criteria and reflection).

Since the fundamental principles behind valid assessment apply to any form of assessment, they can be applied to ensure equity and inclusion in less formal, more holistic types of assessment such as assessment *as* learning.

As mentioned, assessment is often erroneously considered synonymous with testing. In fact, assessment instruments can vary widely in their formality and standardization. Below is a list of such possible instruments, organised:

in order of increasing degree of standardization:

- a flexible set of metacognitive strategies used to consciously reflect on success in a communicative task, an intercultural experience, a strategy chosen to learn vocabulary, etc.;
- a questionnaire supporting reflection and self-assessment of intercultural encounters;
- a writing task and a corresponding set of discourse type-specific criteria for self- and peer assessment relating to relevant aspects of communicative performance (e. g. an oral presentation; a formal letter);
- a generic observation grid of criteria for teacher assessment of oral interaction in the presence of two different languages;
- a list of scaled descriptors of listening comprehension ability at adjacent levels for use in collaborative learner-teacher assessment;
- validated test tasks, complete tests and scoring rubrics produced according to agreed specifications, etc.[129]

The CEFRCV can be used to harmonise teaching and assessment – with feedback and feedforward driving learning and action. CEFRCV descriptors can help to provide transparency and coherence to an integration of curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment for inclusive education, through the 'constructive alignment' of planning, teaching and assessment referred to at the beginning of Section 5, in which students construct meaning in relevant learning and assessment tasks. Using the CEFRCV, one can create an ecology of learning that integrates assessment and learning, with activities at different stages of learning, assessment *for* and *as* learning. Such an approach is often referred to as 'Learning Oriented Assessment.'[130] The key issue here, as suggested above, is to ensure that the formal assessment tasks reflect action-oriented teaching tasks, rather than the traditional psychometric discrete item approach undermining attempts at reform.

[129] Lenz, P., & Berthele, R. (2010). *Assessment in plurilingual and intercultural education*. Satellite study N.2 for the Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 14

[130] Cambridge Assessment have an excellent, very short video explaining Learning-oriented assessment.

7.2. Implications for assessment of the CEFRCV vision

In the previous section, general developments in the field of language assessment were discussed. In this section we look more specifically at the way in which the concepts of action-orientation, mediation and plurilingualism can be related to assessment.

7.2.1. The action-oriented approach and assessment

Agency: The first and most fundamental issue is creating an environment in which the learner can exercise their agency in an assessment process. Already in the 1970s and 1980s there were studies of 'discourse dominance' in the classroom and in test interviews, because learners/candidates generally just answered questions and were unable to exercise any agency at all.[131] This led to the introduction of collaborative classroom work in small groups, and to paired interviews in tests that included a collaborative task between two candidates, in which the interviewer did not intervene.

In the classroom, if students are collaborating in small groups, or if they prepare an artefact, presentation or performance and then present it to the class, the school or parents/teachers, then such tasks can also be used for assessment. CEFR descriptors for communicative language activities and strategies (WHAT) can be used in a short checklist to assess the process of working together and overall task success, while those for communicative language competences (HOW WELL) can be exploited to create either a checklist or a grid of categories and levels to assess level. One can use CEFR descriptors for a particular level to define a pass standard – and norm reference around that.[132]

But how feasible is learner initiative and decision-making in a formal test? In oral tests this has long been successfully implemented by giving the learner(s) the initiative at the beginning of the interview, allowing them to talk about their research subject (at tertiary level), or their interests and their projects in general (at secondary level). Simple techniques, for example, using prompts like "Tell me about X" rather than questions, and then asking follow up questions like "Could you explain a bit more about Y" make a huge difference. Better still are scenario-based tasks, as discussed below.

Collaborative co-construction: Another fundamental aspect of the action-oriented approach is the collaborative co-construction of meaning through mediation in interaction. In a classroom context, as discussed in the previous two subsections, this can be achieved through the organisation of the class in small groups to work on a task or scenario. Teachers sometimes at first imagine that it is difficult to assess individual students in this way, since it is collective work; however, tasks can also be structured so that each student is

[131] In the classroom: Sinclair J. McH., & Coulthard M. (1975). *Towards an analysis of discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sinclair J.McH., & Coulthard M. (1982). *Teacher talk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
In test interviews: van Lier, L. (1989). Reeling, writhing, fainting and stretching in coils: Oral proficiency interviews as conversation. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(3), 489-508

[132] See, examples in Assessing CEFR level from North, B. (2014). *The CEFR in practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

going to have to report back to the group on the results of their research, and there is often a presentation or performance of some kind.[133]

Formal assessment, however, even with the examples of scenario-based assessment mentioned below, focuses on an individual candidate. How, then, could one assess the contributions of individuals? If the work is done by a pair or small group, how does one avoid issues of group dynamics, and of verbal or ideational dominance by one person? [134] In fact, these are not new problems; they are faced by all testing agencies that operate paired interviews. The most common solution is to encourage students to themselves choose their partner(s).

Scenarios: An action-oriented scenario, as we saw in Section 4.2.2, is a sequence of several lessons that involve scaffolded steps (i.e., subtasks) that lead up to a culminating task which involves the creation of an artefact or giving a performance. The selection and sequence of the lessons/subtasks are framed by the context of the scenario. Such scenarios facilitate the integration of learning and assessment: CEFR descriptors that are most relevant to the task can be used in the classroom for teacher, peer, and self-assessment, as discussed above.

Scenarios can also be applied in formal assessment, framing a series of tasks with a real world context, as is done with learning scenarios. A particular problem in language testing is the provision of a context and some kind of motivation (in the sense of "why am I doing this") for a series of test tasks. In the same way as in teaching, the answer to the question "why are we doing this?" should not be "because the teacher said so," for test takers it should be clear what the purpose of the different tasks is and how they relate to real-world language use. Although one can say that just as the classroom is a legitimate real world context, so is a test, and that we all know the rules of the game in a test, this doesn't solve the fundamental problem, for a language test, of "who is the addressee?" A scenario is a way to address these issues: the tasks can be linked together and given purpose through the context of a scenario in which the candidate receives a mission with a defined addressee, which has the added advantage of making it easier to take into account socio-linguistic competence, which, at the end of the day, is far more crucial in real life than whether one makes a few grammatical or vocabulary mistakes.

Scenario-based assessment – which has recently been developed in research[135] distinctly from action-oriented scenarios, although there is a conceptual link between the two – seeks to solve this issue. In addition, it integrates all language activities into a whole and it allows the learner more agency on how they approach the test tasks. The idea of scenario-

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[133] North, B. (1991). Standardisation of continuous assessment grades. In Alderson, J. C. & North B. (Eds.), *Language testing in the 1990s* (pp. 167–177). London, Macmillan/British Council.
North, B. (1993). L'évaluation collective dans les Eurocentres. *Le Français dans le Monde - Récherches et Applications*, *Évaluations et Certifications en Langue Etrangère,* numéro spécial, août-septembre 1993, 69-81.

[134] Discourse studies in the 1980s suggested that while males tend to dominate the discourse in mixed groups in terms of quantity said, females nonetheless often end up dominating with their ideas in final decisions taken.

[135] Purpura, J. E. (2021). *A rationale for using a scenario-based assessment to measure competency-based, situated second and foreign language proficiency*. In M. Masperi M., C. Cervini & Y. Bardière (Eds.), *Évaluation des acquisitions langagières : Du formatif au certificatif. MediAzioni, 32*, A54-A96.

based assessment is to give candidates a problem to solve within the simulated real-world context of a scenario, thus providing them with an educational experience that is worthwhile in its own right. It also gives more room for creativity, with posters, dossiers, and presentations as outputs. Current European examples of scenario-based assessment include the written and oral examinations for French university language centres,[136] the EVAL-IC test developed to test intercomprehension in five Romance languages,[137] and the Austrian Certificate of Plurilingualism (See Section 7.2.3).[138]

Integrated skills: The action-oriented approach takes a holistic view, promoting the integration of skills and competences in phases of activity, as in the steps (=subtasks) of a scenario, which provide scaffolding to support learners in successfully completing the culminating task. Such integration of a sequence of tasks occurs regularly in teaching, but it does pose a problem for reporting separate results for different language activities. However, once again this is not a new issue. Several assessment agencies experimented with tests of integrated skills already in the late 1980s and today such tests are not uncommon.[139] The responses to input texts can be collected before moving on to interaction and production tasks, allowing results to be reported as a profile. The open question is whether one should insist, in the marking scheme for the final product, on the presence of specific key points that were included in the input documents. This is also an issue in the assessment of mediating a text, as in cross-linguistic mediation tasks.

7.2.2. Mediation and assessment

Collaborative co-construction of meaning in small groups, scenario-based assessment, and integrated skills all involve some forms of mediation. The fundamental question is whether one should assess this type of mediation. Do we need to assess everything? On the other hand, if something is not assessed, will it be taken seriously? If tested, should this assessment be integrated into a phase or phases of written and spoken examinations, or should mediation be tested separately, with the potential danger that it will then be interpreted just as a separate skill, with no influence on anything else? These issues are discussed below in relation to the three categories into which the CEFR descriptors for mediation are presented: mediation of a text, mediation of communication, and mediation of concepts.

7.2.2.1. Mediating a text

A lot of experience has been gained over the last 20 years with the assessment of the mediation of texts, which has been included in examinations in Germany and Greece since the early 2000s. In the CEFRCV, 'texts' are defined very broadly and cover films, discussions, etc., but in these examinations the term usually applies to written texts. The approach in Germany includes selective cross-linguistic mediation of content from a text in an additional language into the language of schooling as well as mediation from a text in the language of schooling into the additional language, while the Greek approach focuses

[136] Certificat de compétences en langues de l'enseignement supérieur:

[137] Fiorenza, E., & Diego-Hernández, E. (2020). The challenge of assessing plurilingual repertoires: The EVAL-IC project. *Research Notes, 78*, 43-50

[138] Plurilingual exams.

[139] e.g., Trinity College London's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams

more on the latter (language of schooling to additional language), plus, sometimes, one-language (intralinguistic) mediation tasks just in the additional language. In both the Greek and German cases, the mediation of a text is an individual activity in a written exam, requiring the candidate to write a short text (frequently a letter or email) using information taken from the source text. However, the Greek examinations have also always had an oral test which often requires mediation of a text as well as 'Acting as an intermediary' (discussed below in Section 7.2.2.3),[140] and in Germany oral mediation activities have been included in some school leaving exams since 2015.

These kinds of tasks have legitimised the use of the language of schooling – and sometimes mother tongue if that is different – in the language classroom and, as discussed in Section 5.3, they have been shown to foster classroom activity that encourages plurilingualism and interculturality. However, since the task is not embedded in an overall scenario, the contextualisation, unless one is careful, can sometimes be rather scant or artificial, resulting is a rather unrealistic exercise,[141] a communicative version of the traditional activities of translation and précis.

In a more action-oriented approach, the assessment scenario could be broader and include a range of language activities in different phases, with some collaborative co-construction of meaning, as in the scenario-based assessment mentioned in Section 7.2.1 above. In terms of a classroom scenario, phases could come in various orders, but there could for example involve:

- researching information alone (reception) and making sense of it (mediating for oneself: 'Notetaking');
- explaining to the partner/group what you found (mediating a text: 'Relaying specific information'; 'Explaining data'; 'Processing a text');
- collaborating together (mediating concepts: 'Facilitating collaborative interaction'; 'Collaborating to construct meaning'; 'Encouraging conceptual talk') in order to:
- create an artefact (production, perhaps including mediating text)

7.2.2.2. Mediating communication

'Acting as an intermediary in informal situations' – between people who, for one reason or another, are unable to understand each other directly – was, like mediating a text, one of the aspects of mediation highlighted in the CEFR 2001 and therefore it has long appeared in oral papers of the Greek KPG examinations mentioned above, as well as in German exams, though in the latter case this is often in written form. Examples of situational scenarios, some from exams, were given when discussing this activity in Section 5.3.

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[140] For the Greek KPG exams, see: Dendrinos, B. (2013). *Testing and teaching mediation. Directions in English language teaching, testing and assessment*. Athens: RCeL publications.
Appendices is: Stathopoulou, M. (2015). *Cross-language mediation in foreign language teaching and testing*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

[141] "[I]t is sometimes the case that the contextualisation with a particular addressee is considerably underspecified [so that the context given] can be seen as above all an excuse for a summary." (Kolb, E., 2016, *Sprachmittlung: Studien zur Modellierung einer komplexen Kompetenz*. Münster: Waxmann, p. 52 (our translation).

With the other two aspects of mediating communication, 'Facilitating pluricultural space' and 'Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements' – which concern helping to find common ground – there is a very real question whether they should be assessed at all, even considering the argument that this is the core of cultural mediation and as such deserves attention. Consequently there has been experimentation in Spain on operationalising assessment of these aspects, focusing on the aspect of finding consensus.[142]

7.2.2.3. Mediating concepts

As was suggested in Section 5.3, learners do not automatically know how to work effectively in groups and the descriptors for mediating concepts have been shown to raise students' awareness about how to go about this. The descriptor scales for mediating concepts, particularly those for 'Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers'; 'Collaborating to construct meaning;' and 'Encouraging conceptual talk,' describe moves that encourage the 'languaging'[143] process that enhances the quality of problem-solving discussion in small groups, as learners articulate thoughts and build upon each other's ideas. Does this mean that classroom assessment should evaluate their ability to do so? Using a short checklist of relevant mediation descriptors for informal teacher, peer and self-assessment in phases of group languaging could be very helpful to foster learners' mediation competences. However, the fact that mediation processes can be conducive to effective learning does not mean that they need to be formally assessed. There is some evidence that experience of mediation activities and of consciously working with relevant mediation descriptors while languaging in small groups contributes to a higher quality of language in the final product – assessed with conventional criteria – at least as concerns C-level students in tertiary education.[144] The most promising approach, therefore, might be to use a checklist of relevant mediation descriptors to assess the *process* through informal teacher, peer and self-assessment, and then to continue to use a checklist or grid based on the descriptors of communicative language competences for formal assessment of the final *product.*

7.2.3. Plurilingualism and assessment

Seeing learners as social agents in an action-oriented approach implies the recognition of the presence of several languages in the classroom. In addition, a plurilingual approach to languages across the curriculum encourages the use of more than one target language in activities. In an assessment activity, this then raises the question of when to allow multiple languages and when to insist on the use of a particular language. This is not actually so complicated: an integrated task or scenario involves phases of different kinds of activity as discussed just above; one can simply define and communicate which language(s) are to be used for each phase and for the final product(s), and when students can translanguage as

[142] Sànchez Cuadrado, A. (Ed.) (2022). *Mediación en el aprendizaje de lenguas*. Madrid: Anaya.

[143] See Sections 3.1.1; 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.2 for discussion of languaging and its importance in mediation.

[144] Pavlovskaya, I. Y., & Lankina, O. Y. (2019). How new CEFR mediation descriptors can help to assess the discussion skills of management students: Global and analytical scales. *CEFR Journal: Research and Practice, 1*, 33-40.

they wish. Such decisions are driven by reflecting upon how learners can strategically draw upon their repertoire to advance their learning in the target language.

One example of use of different languages in a structured way is the oral examination for the Austrian "Certificate of Plurilingualism" for upper secondary professional colleagues, which has phases with different types of cross-linguistic mediation.[145] In this 15-minute oral test with two teachers as examiners, candidates are expected to show level B2 in L2 (the first additional language) and level B1 in L3 (the second additional language). They also have to demonstrate the ability to switch between languages, inter-pluricultural competence, and communication strategies. In Phase 1, a sustained monologue task (mediating text), they present information provided in the language of schooling (e.g., the results of a survey) in their two additional languages to the two examiners (who pretend to only speak one of those languages), alternating between the two languages as they explain each point to each person. Then in Phase 2, an interactive task (mediating concepts and communication), they collaborate with the two examiners in the two languages to design a joint project, acting as an intermediary between them and providing background information as required. The three categories of defined assessment criteria are: (i) task achievement; (ii) range and accuracy of spoken language; and (iii) language switch and interaction. The latter is defined in five sub-points on a 10-point scale published in the framework for the test, published on the test website. The CEFRCV provides a descriptor scale for Building on plurilingual repertoire, which can also be helpful in formulating descriptors to provide levels of plurilingual performance. The Austrian exam also has a parallel website of plurilingual lessons to prepare the candidates, available in English as well as German.

Intercomprehension represents a different approach to plurilingual competence, leveraging the similarities between languages to develop partial competences.[146] Here the CEFRCV offers two relevant descriptor scales, 'Identifying cues and inferring' and 'Plurilingual comprehension.' In addition, the REFIC project provided a complete set of descriptors for intercomprehension in French for the CEFR's three broad levels Basic User (A1-A2), Independent User (B1-B2), and Proficient User (C1-C2). More recently the EVAL-IC project has produced descriptors for both receptive and interactive intercomprehension in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian. These can inspire assessment procedures, such as one case study scenario in which candidates handled inputs in all these five languages.[147]

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[145] Assessing plurilingualism: An example from practice (workshop)
Steinhuber, B. (2022). Implementing plurilingual oral exams and plurilingual lessons in Austrian upper secondary vocational colleges. In *Enriching 21st century language education:* The *CEFR Companion Volume in practice,* (pp. 109-116). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

[146] De Carlo, M., & Garbarino, S. (2022). Intercomprehension: Strengths and opportunities of a pluralistic approach. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford & G. Lawrence (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 337-359). London and New York: Routledge.

[147] De Carlo, M., & Andrade, I. (2023). Towards an assessment of intercomprehension competences in coherence with plurilingual approaches. In Melo-Pfeifer, S. & Ollivier, C. (Eds.), *Assessment of plurilingual competence and plurlingual learners in educational settings*(pp. 204-216). London/New York: Routledge.

7.2.4. Intercultural competence and assessment

The assessment of intercultural competence, or intercultural communicative competence (ICC), is very common in the business world, being usually undertaken through self-report questionnaires. One project that developed descriptors and linked assessment tools for intercultural competence was the 2004 INCA project, aimed at young engineers and professionals offered postings abroad, or those working in multicultural or multilingual teams in their own country. The project defined intercultural competence in three dimensions, each divided into two:

Openness:

- respect for otherness (ability to look at all customs and values from a distance, regarding them at the same time as worthwhile in their own right);
- tolerance of ambiguity (ability to accept ambiguity and lack of clarity and deal with it constructively);

Knowledge:

- knowledge discovery (ability to acquire and actually use cultural knowledge);
- empathy (ability to intuitively understand what other people think and how they feel);

Adaptability:

- behavioural flexibility (ability to adapt one's own behaviour to different requirements and situations);
- communicative awareness (ability to identify and consciously work with communicative conventions).

The INCA descriptors are presented in three levels: basic competence (tending to respond to events rather than plan for them), intermediate competence (a neutral stance with ability to adapt to the demands of unfamiliar situations) and full competence (with a large repertoire of knowledge, skills and strategies plus the confidence to take a polite stand over issues when necessary). The project also developed assessment materials with intercultural scenarios, role-plays and a portfolio.

However, more generally in language education the focus has been on awareness-raising rather than assessment, with the expression (self)reflection often being preferred to that of (self-)assessment. As mentioned in Section 2.1.4, CARAP/FREPA contains an extensive series of descriptors and activities addressing aspects of intercultural competence, but it does not address the question of assessment. Another ECML project, *Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence: A guide for language teachers and teacher educators*, emphasises that any such assessment should be formative rather than summative, continuous, and should cover existential competence (how to be: savoir-être) as well as know-how (savoir-faire) and knowledge (savoirs).

8. Conclusion

The CEFR 2001, with its concepts of constructive alignment, social agency, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, action-orientation, and mediation, was a very forward-looking document at the time, in alignment with emerging developments is sociolinguistics, language education and the wider educational field – even though the significance of these concepts were not always easy to find in a dense document that was in many respects a compromise between different perspectives and pedagogic cultures.

In the 20 years following the CEFR 2001, both developments in applied linguistics and bottom-up experimentation with these concepts by practitioners in the field have confirmed the direction of travel tentatively suggested by the CEFR. The CEFR Companion Volume therefore explains this developed vision for action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education more explicitly, as does this current document, extending the CEFR model in the process.

In a period in which a dominant neoliberal culture encourages extrinsic values like wealth, status and fame rather than intrinsic values like empathy, intimacy and community, amid a worrying slide towards ethno-nationalism,[148] it is more important than ever that language education is seen not as the mere instrumental acquisition of a new code – and that that code should be English – but rather as an opening up to the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of our societies and an education in democratic values. Enhancing mutual understanding, ensuring democratic culture and preventing conflict were the original aims of the Council of Europe in 1949, and the reason it became involved in language education. These values are more important than ever today and an approach to engaging students in action-oriented plurilingual and intercultural education, apart from being a more effective way of increasing motivation and hence proficiency, can contribute substantially to raising the coming generation's awareness of the wider stakes in play.

The participants at the 2023 Reflection Day *The CEFR Companion Volume: Enhancing engagement in language education* very much saw the value of the CEFRCV as a tool able to infuse such innovation in language education at different levels from curricula to pedagogy, from teaching to assessment, from teacher education to the integration of digital literacies. The CEFRCV vision makes space for home languages, valuing individual linguistic and cultural profiles, opening to other school subjects and to extracurricular competences as a way to embrace diversity and develop interculturality. In this respect, participants highlighted how the CEFRCV can be seen through a human rights and decolonial lens, and its principles can be combined with the those of the RFCDC as the overall philosophy of the CEFRCV is coherent with the RFCDC and reflects the needs of today's teaching realities and of teacher education.

The CEFRCV key concepts (e.g., action-orientation, mediation, plurilingualism), have considerable innovative potential for fostering inclusive language education and the

[148] This concerns not just immigrants or even linguistic minorities. There is also the tendency for neighbouring societies strongly sharing linguistic features, but in some form of tension or conflict with one another, to define their dialect as a separate language. For a discussion of this phenomenon in relation to the Balkans, see Beacco, J. C. (2005). *Languages and language repertoires: Plurilingualism as a way of life in Europe. A Reference study*. Strasbourg Council of Europe.

development of learner agency and awareness. The action-oriented approach offers an entry door for mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence and a way in which learner agency can be provided space to develop in the classroom. Taken together with the use of descriptors for awareness-raising and goal setting, these concepts have the potential to revolutionize the language class when they are applied.

One must remember that people engage with concepts gradually and change in education always takes longer than envisaged. The depth and wealth of concepts that the CEFRCV foregrounds will require some time to be fully integrated by the field, at the different levels: practice, policy making and research. Nevertheless, what is important to highlight in conclusion is that the CEFRCV provides a solid basis for action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education. As one participant stated at the end of the Reflection Day, we are finally where we hoped we would be some twenty years ago. With the CEFRCV we are now talking about core concepts that bear great promise for innovation and social justice in a quality language education for all.