THE CEFR COMPANION VOLUME: A KEY RESOURCE FOR INCLUSIVE PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION

2021 Webinar Series

Webinar 8: December 10th, 16.00 CET

Action-Oriented Inclusive Plurilingual Sign Language Education: Mediation

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Preparatory reading

To be read before the webinar.

There are two short recommended readings in this document:

- The introduction to the chapter of the CEFR Companion Volume on Signing Competences
- The introduction to Mediation in the CEFR Companion Volume, with the descriptor scale for Overall Mediation

Chapter 6
THE CEFR ILLUSTRATIVE DESCRIPTOR SCALES: SIGNING COMPETENCES [Introduction]

Many of the CEFR descriptors, especially those for communicative language activities, are as applicable to sign languages as they are to spoken languages, since sign languages are used to fulfil the same communicative functions. Hence these descriptors are modality-neutral, and modifications have been made to the formulation to emphasise this. However, there are obviously ways in which sign languages differ substantially from spoken languages. Fundamentally, they involve grammatical competences in the use of space, which we term "diagrammatical competence". They also involve a broadened notion of the term "text", namely for video-recorded signing that is not based on a written script. These competences go far beyond the paralinguistic features of communication through spoken language. The signing space is typically used to establish and later refer to relevant persons, places and objects in a form of spatial mapping. Sign languages then have syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology just like any other language. These differ of course from one sign language to another, as there are different sign languages in different countries, and sometimes more than one sign language in the same country. But there are certain common features such as the use of indexing, pronouns and classifier constructions. In addition, non-manual elements (facial expression, body orientation, head movement, etc.) and constructed action are used extensively in addition to hand and arm movements that are more traditionally considered to be the articulators of sign languages.

For communication, and reflecting contact with spoken language users, the repertoire of lexical and productive signs is supplemented by literally spelling out words or names using fingerspelling. Roughly, each letter of the spoken language script corresponds to a handshape. In due course, it may become lexicalised and phonologised. Fingerspelling, however, is a means of conveying something unfamiliar, for example a proper name, or a concept that does not have an established sign in the sign language used. Thus, fingerspelling is one of several contact phenomena that facilitate access to the written knowledge of spoken languages. Furthermore, fingerspelling is used to borrow new expressions from spoken languages, which may eventually also become lexicalised.

The categories for signing competences relate to the linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences found in spoken languages, and therefore the descriptor scales specifically for signing competences are provided here under those three headings. Scales are provided for receptive and productive competences in seven pairs: two for linguistic competence, one for sociolinguistic competence and four for different aspects of pragmatic competence.

A few of the descriptors calibrated for signing competences are of a more global nature, similar to those included earlier. These have been kept in signing competences because they help to demonstrate the content coherence between the descriptors for signing competences and those for other areas.

3.4. MEDIATION

[…]

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.

	Overall mediation
C2	Can mediate effectively and naturally, taking on different roles according to the needs of the people and situation involved, identifying nuances and undercurrents and guiding a sensitive or delicate discussion. Can explain in clear, fluent, well-structured language the way facts and arguments are presented, conveying evaluative aspects and most nuances precisely, and pointing out sociocultural implications (e.g. use of register, understatement, irony and sarcasm).
C1	Can act effectively as a mediator, helping to maintain positive interaction by interpreting different perspectives, managing ambiguity, anticipating misunderstandings and intervening diplomatically in order to redirect the conversation. Can build on different contributions to a discussion, stimulating reasoning with a series of questions. Can convey clearly and fluently in well-structured language the significant ideas in long, complex texts, whether or not they relate to their own fields of interest, including evaluative aspects and most nuances.
B2	Can establish a supportive environment for sharing ideas and facilitate discussion of delicate issues, showing appreciation of different perspectives, encouraging people to explore issues and adjusting sensitively the way they express things. Can build on others' ideas, making suggestions for ways forward. Can convey the main content of well-structured but long and propositionally complex texts on subjects within their fields of professional, academic and personal interest, clarifying the opinions and purposes of speakers/signers.
	Can work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds, creating a positive atmosphere by providing support, asking questions to identify common goals, comparing options for how to achieve them and explaining suggestions for what to do next. Can further develop others' ideas, pose questions that invite reactions from different perspectives and propose a solution or next steps. Can convey detailed information and arguments reliably, e.g. the significant point(s) contained in complex but well-structured texts within their fields of professional, academic and personal interest.
B1	Can collaborate with people from other backgrounds, showing interest and empathy by asking and answering simple questions, formulating and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches. Can convey the main points made in long texts expressed in uncomplicated language on topics of personal interest, provided they can check the meaning of certain expressions.
	Can introduce people from different backgrounds, showing awareness that some questions may be perceived differently, and invite other people to contribute their expertise and experience as well as their views. Can convey information given in clear, well-structured informational texts on subjects that are familiar or of personal or current interest, although lexical limitations cause difficulty with formulation at times.
A2	Can play a supportive role in interaction, provided other participants speak/sign slowly and that one or more of the participants helps them to contribute and to express their suggestions. Can convey relevant information contained in clearly structured, short, simple, informational texts, provided the texts concern concrete, familiar subjects and are formulated in simple everyday language.
	Can use simple words/signs to ask someone to explain something. Can recognise when difficulties occur and indicate in simple language the apparent nature of a problem. Can convey the main point(s) involved in short, simple conversations or texts on everyday subjects of immediate interest, provided these are expressed clearly in simple language.

	Overall mediation
A1	Can use simple words/signs and non-verbal signals to show interest in an idea. Can convey simple, predictable information of immediate interest given in short, simple signs and notices, posters and programmes.
Pre-A1	*No descriptors available*