

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ENRICHING 21ST CENTURY LANGUAGE
EDUCATION:
THE CEFR COMPANION VOLUME IN
PRACTICE

Strasbourg, 24 May – 25 May 2022

REPORT

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Introduction

The CEFR Companion Volume gives a new impulse to the CEFR project, effectively replacing the 2001 version, which remains available for reference and further study. It updates and extends the concepts in the CEFR, underlining the shift to a complex vision of the situated and integrated nature of language learning and language use, with a focus on the agency of the user/learner as a **social agent**. Following publication of the *Companion Volume* in provisional form in February 2018, the conference *The CEFR Companion Volume: Language education for dynamic and inclusive societies: Promoting plurilingual and pluricultural education* was held in Strasbourg, France in May 2018. At that conference, participants were invited to draft proposals for case studies in the implementation of the concepts and descriptors of the *CEFR Companion Volume*. After the conference, 35 case study were proposed, some involving a network of institutions. Of these submissions, 19, concerning mediation, plurilingualism and online interaction in secondary, higher and adult education sectors as well as teacher education, were selected for publication in the volume *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion Volume in practice*.

To celebrate the publication, the one-and-a-half-day conference, *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion Volume in practice* was held on May 24– 25, 2022 at the Agora Building of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The event was hybrid, with all but two of the case studies in the volume being presented, 16 in presence and one at distance. Sessions were conducted in a choice of English and/or French, with simultaneous interpretation available during plenary sessions.

The aims of the conference were to:

- publicise the volume of case studies on implementing aspects of the *CEFR Companion Volume*;
- further the CEFR concept of inclusive, action-oriented, plurilingual language education;
- maintain the momentum for reflection and reform in language education achieved with the *CEFR Companion Volume* and the related CEFR Online Workshop Series 2022;

and last but not least:

- value the contributions made by institutions and educators supporting the priorities of the Council of Europe in this field.

Programme

The full programme, given as an appendix, was organised into four sessions.

Session 1, on the afternoon of May 24, was devoted to presenting and discussing the key concepts of the *CEFR Companion Volume*. An opening address by Villano Qiriazzi, Head of the Education Department, which placed the conference within the context of the Council of Europe's work to promote action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education, was followed by four short presentations, two in English (*What does the CEFR Companion Volume consist of?* Brian North; *The learner as social agent and the affordances of digital spaces*, Bernd Rüschoff) and two in French (*Le volume complémentaire : qu'y a-t-il de nouveau pour l'enseignement des langues ?* Evelyne Bérard; *L'apprenant comme acteur social : médiation et plurilinguisme*, Enrica Piccardo) and culminated in a round table on the key messages of the *CEFR Companion Volume*, moderated by Waldemar Martyniuk. An account of the discussion is given below.

In Sessions 2 and 3 on May 25, the case studies in the volume *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion Volume in practice* were presented in two parallel sessions, with simultaneous interpretation English/French offered in one of the rooms. Seven of the 17 presentations

concerned mainly mediation, four concerned the implementation of plurilingualism, two a new approach to the teaching of literature, two online interaction, one phonology and one a programme of promotion of the Companion Volume in the UNICert® and NULTE networks. The presentations summarized the action taken in the case study being discussed, including follow up activities, as well as the impact on teaching at the institution(s) concerned.

The final session, Session 4, consisted of a workshop session and a second round table, with There was also a brief presentation of the first of series of 'capsule videos' explaining CEFR key concepts, this prototype being on the learner as a social agent.

Since the full texts of the different case studies, listed in the programme in the appendix, are available online, the rest of this report focuses on the 'live' aspects of the conference: the two round tables and the workshop "*From the case studies back to key concepts: improving language education.*"

Outcomes of the Round Table *The key messages of the CEFR Companion Volume*

Following the presentations of key aspects of the CEFR on the first afternoon, questions were put to a round table. The panel consisted of Evelyne Bérard, Daniela Fasoglio, Brian North and Enrica Piccardo and the discussion was moderated by Waldemar Martyniuk. Questions were focused on three areas: 1) plurilingualism, in particular the issue of how to operationalize it in practice; 2) mediation, more specifically the issue of how to define and delineate mediation (e.g. relative to interaction) and the question of whether and how to assess it; and finally 3) terminological questions connected to plurilingualism, plurilanguaging and translanguaging.

Plurilingualism:

Why is plurilingualism considered to be (in terms of the CEFR descriptive scheme) a general competence rather than a communicative language competence?

Plurilingual/pluricultural competence is a *transversal* competence, which has an aspect of *savoir-être* in terms of the CEFR's model for general competence, with: *savoirs* (declarative knowledge), *savoir-faire* (skills), and *savoir-être* (existential competence, including attitude).

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence relates to the personal experience and trajectory of the individual. There is an individual and societal aspect: the way someone acquires knowledge of other languages and cultures depends on the environment in which someone grows up and then continues to develop in relation to the societal contexts to which the person concerned is exposed. 'Language biographies' can be useful tools to help students become aware of their plurilingualism¹.

In addition, someone could be multilingual by acquiring knowledge of different languages, but keeping this in separate 'compartments,' having communicative language competence in several separate languages, a form of individual multilingualism, without awareness of how the languages relate and interact.² Plurilingualism is closely related to attitude – openness to different languages – and entails a high degree of intercultural competence, a key to competences for democratic culture and to citizenship, meaning it should be present in both the language classroom and also all other classes too.

¹ Moore, D. & Gajo, L. (2009). Introduction. French voices on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Theory, significance and perspective. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 6(2), 137–153.

Piccardo, E., Lawrence, G., & Germain-Rutherford, A. (Eds.) (2022). *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education*. London and New York: Routledge.

² See, for example: Piccardo, E. (2013). Plurilingualism and curriculum design: Towards a synergic vision. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 600-614.

How can we help our students with their plurilingual competence when we don't know their language?

Teachers naturally feel ill-equipped to deal with lots of languages in their classroom and also have reservations about losing control of what is happening, which is not easy for them to accept. However, it is good for the students – the development of their identity – to feel that their teacher is willing to learn a few words in their language(s). In fact, one doesn't need to speak the languages represented in the class but rather to put the learners themselves in the centre, making space for their languages and seeing them (and their relatives) as the experts on the language concerned. Natalie Auger's early work includes videos showing Arab- and Russian-speaking students in France acting as 'experts' in this way³). In one school in the Netherlands in which 85% of the students spoke other languages, the students didn't have enough Dutch to understand mathematical concepts; the teacher therefore made a big poster with all the relevant mathematical terms and the students, with the help of parents, wrote the equivalents on post-its, which they put on the poster. In this way, a shared vocabulary to talk about maths developed in the class.

Language friendly schools⁴ are schools in which all languages are welcome. In line with complexity theories, in a multilingual class as a teacher, one has to accept an element of chaos – moments when one doesn't understand what learners are talking about. But if students have a mission, a goal they are working towards, then pretty much most of the time their discussion will be 'on task' – if there is an opportunity to construct meaning in their language(s), or just contribute something from their language(s), one can imagine that they would be happy to feel included. One can turn this challenge into an opportunity. Learners with a migration background are learning the language around them, and other students become curious about the other languages and want to know more. In fact, the real problems with multilingual/multicultural classes in practice tend to be on the cultural side: e.g. some students scared of taking risks and making mistakes, others excessively shy.

How can one operationalize a plurilingual approach with older learners used to thinking of their languages separately?

With older learners and adults, language is something they can manipulate and discover (e.g. etymology, similarities between languages, the relationship of languages and their dialects). In this way, learners can discover their own plurilingualism – registers and or/dialects. Discovery is the place to start: They can discover their own plurilingualism (registers/dialects – encounters with different languages). They can be sent out to discover languages in the environment, for example in advertisements, names of restaurants, menus, games. Collecting instances of languages and then talking in class about languages helps them become aware of what language is and the way they can use it.

It is also a question of challenging (older) learners to leave their comfort zone. For example, you can most likely understand Slovak if you know Polish. Given a text in Slovak for the first time, Polish students claimed not to understand anything. The second time they were given a Slovak text they began to reason in a different way, and the third time they began to say they could put receptive Slovak on their CVs.

³ Auger, N. (2005). *Comparons nos langues* [Compare our languages], DVD and accompanying booklet. Paris: Scéren (Services Culture Éditions Ressources pour l'Éducation Nationale).

⁴ <https://languagefriendlyschool.org/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLjB4GXqC8>.

Hurwitz, D. R., & Kambel, E. R. (2020). Redressing language-based exclusion and punishment in education and the Language Friendly School initiative. *Global Campus Human Rights Journal*, 2020 5-24
<http://doi.org/20.500.11825/1707>

Mediation

What role and what challenges may mediation have in a move towards a more integrative, less unidimensional language assessment, not only for formative assessment but also for certification purposes?

Mediation, in the sense of cross-linguistic (spoken and written) mediation of text and acting as a (linguistic and cultural) intermediary in communication, has already been successfully included in written language examinations for over 15 years in both Greece⁵ and Germany.⁶ To do so, of course, one has to create a test construct, which means isolating certain elements, in order to assure validity and reliability. The main problem in reducing mediation to an examination task for an individual student in this way is to create and describe a credible context that 'requires' the sought after type of mediation⁷.

One of the main challenges with mediation relates to the shift towards a more integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment, integrated skills with collaborative groupwork. However, one should remember that these different elements have already been adopted in summative language assessment. The recognition of the problems related to conventional interviews, in which the interviewer has discourse dominance and the interviewee no agency, has led to the progressive adoption of pairing learners for oral exams and eliciting interaction between them. But that means what is being assessed is shared discourse, and the difference between a pair of two and a group of four is only a question of degree. Provided tasks are well-structured, one can focus on students in turn, even in a class working in small groups.⁸

Another example is shown in chapter 6 in the volume of case studies⁹ being celebrating at this event; it concerns a high stakes oral exam – an Austrian certificate of plurilingualism – in which the test has two phases: the first in which the candidate mediates text and data and the second in which they act as an intermediary, mediating communication. One can find solutions. For example, at university paired assignments are common, in which the two students share the grade given. Also in secondary education, coursework is increasingly included in the calculation of the final grade students receive. Why not also allow collaborative assignments, and shared grades for collaborative work at secondary level too? The essential point is that the issues related to assessing mediation are not actually new issues; it is usually a matter of degree rather than breaking entirely new ground. Action-oriented scenarios, like in the Austrian exam, can give context – and could be extended to collaborative tasks

⁵ Dendrinou, B. (2006). Mediation in communication, language teaching and testing. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 22, Thessaloniki Association of Applied Linguistics, 9–35.

Dendrinou, B. (2013). Testing and teaching mediation. Directions in English language teaching, testing and assessment. Athens: RCEl publications.

⁶ Reimann, D., & Rössler, A. (Eds.) (2013). *Sprachmittlung im Fremdsprachenunterricht [Linguistic mediation in foreign language teaching]*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.

⁷ Kolb, E. (2016). *Sprachmittlung: Studien zur Modellierung einer komplexen Kompetenz [Linguistic mediation: Studies to model a complex competence]*. Münster: Münchener Arbeiten zur Fremdsprachen-Forschung, Waxmann.

⁸ North, B. (1993). L'évaluation collective dans les Eurocentres [Assessment in small groups at Eurocentres]. *Le Français dans le monde - Recherches et applications*, numéro spécial : *Évaluations et certifications en langue étrangère*, 69-81.

North, B. (2014). *The CEFR in practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁹ Steinhuber, B. (2022). Implementing plurilingual oral exams and plurilingual lessons in Austrian upper secondary vocational colleges. In B. North, E. Piccardo, T. Goodier, D. Fasoglio, R. Margonis, & B. Rüschoff (Eds.), (in press) *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR Companion Volume in practice*, (pp. 109-116). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

with two candidates. For individual tasks, variations on 'in-tray simulations',¹⁰ in which learners consult different artefacts, could be used. It is often a matter of one needing think more creatively.

Can and should mediation be assessed at all, as required in Spanish Official Language Schools for adults, and if so, should it be strategy-oriented or product-oriented assessment?

Firstly, it is important to ask oneself: What is assessment? A broad definition is needed. Assessment is a process in which one purposefully and systematically collects information on knowledge, skills and attitudes, relates observations to the learning goals – and communicate results, very often as formative feedback. A key issue is who does the assessing. The teacher, of course, but the learners can also do it through peer and self-assessment. One can use the descriptors as a reference to see where one is in the process, which will help raise awareness and enhance proficiency.

Research is needed on what aspects of mediation can be assessed and how. Obviously, as mentioned above, mediation of a text is easier because one can see it.

Regarding the question of assessing process (strategy) or product there is no right and wrong. There are some examples at postgraduate level of final products being improved in terms of the quality of language used, due to mediation (guided by descriptors) earlier in the process¹¹. Mediation is now included in upper secondary (lycée) in France and there has been quite some discussion among inspectors on the issue of whether it should be included in formative assessment or seen as a way to improve, in this way, the quality of the final product. In the end they have decided to see it as a way to improve the product, since many aspects that might be criteria for a direct assessment of mediation ability (e.g. having initiative) are personal characteristics that some have and some do not have. The product, with evidence of the mediation of a text, is easier and perhaps fairer to assess. On the other hand, if one wants to encourage the process, one can select some appropriate mediation descriptors and use them to help guide peer and teacher observation informal assessment. One can also focus the attention on the way that language tools are used as part of the mediation process. The key issue, whether one is talking about assessing the product or process, is to define what one is looking for and, from that definition, to develop criteria and assessment rubrics.

Mediation is a very broad concept. Is every act in language education mediation? Is every meaningful communication an act of mediation? Is interaction also mediation? How can we narrow it down?

This was an issue in the development project. Refining down mediation was really challenging because one sees mediation everywhere – it doesn't just concern language and is a very broad subject. Therefore, a mind map was developed to identify the areas specific to language education, including online interaction, intralinguistic and interlinguistic mediation, as seen in the conceptual model.¹² The aim and scope of the descriptors are to highlight some areas that can be made visible and dealt with in the class, and so help to broaden and improve language education. When one has a very rich notion, one has to chunk it down into categories. People may then say that they would have done it slightly differently, come to different categories. But when one delineates big concepts into categories, the

¹⁰ In-tray simulations (or 'in-tray exercises') are a form of role-enacting simulation, based on the pre-email "in tray" that sat on people's desks in offices. They were popular in at least English language teaching in the 1980s and 90s (see for example Jones, K., 1982, *Simulations in language teaching*, Cambridge University Press).

¹¹ Pavlovskaya, I., Lankina, O. (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
Lankina, O. Y. & Pect, Y. V. (2020). Classroom-based assessment of group discussion: Challenges and opportunities. *CEFR Journal Research and Practice*, 3, 116-125.

¹² Shown in the presentation by Enrica Piccardo. See also North, B. & Piccardo, E. (in press). The conceptualisation of mediation in the new CEFR. In P. Katelhön & P. Marečková (Eds.) *Sprachmittlung im schulischen und universitären Kontext [Linguistic mediation in the school and university context]*. Berlin: Frank and Timme.

way one highlights certain aspects, there is an inevitable assumption of 'authority' In the way in which it is done. In the end, three main categories were established: mediating text, mediating concepts and mediating communication. – but for example, the plurilingual aspect could have been treated as a fourth category. It was decided to present it, like online interaction, as a related but separate category. The important point is to realise that all these dimensions exist and to then decide to work according to one's needs and the needs in one's context.

Not all interaction is mediation. Much of the time interaction is a way of passing the time, chatting away in a kind of ping-pong in phatic communication. The role of interaction like this is to establish and maintain personal relations, one of the most important things in life, but it is not mediation. In mediation the interaction is motivated by an issue, which could be resolving a problem; facilitating communication; resolving a delicate situation; explaining something to someone who doesn't understand it; working someone out together with other people; tossing ideas around in order to articulate a position or clarify an issue – the interaction is motivated, not aimless.

Terminology

How do you see the differences and similarities between translanguaging and plurilinguaging? Why do we need all these terms?

The short answer is that translanguaging is a plurilingual practice and it was described in that way by the American and British scholars who promoted it until around 2011. Then, it gained a sort of critical mass in order to become successful as a label, and it shifted to also being described as a theory. Translanguaging was born in the 1990s at exactly the same time as plurilingualism and the CEFR. It started in the bilingual context of language regeneration in Wales, and it continues to be associated with bilingual contexts. At that time the conventional approach in language education was strictly 'target language only:' take your (linguistic) jacket off at the door and put on another jacket. In that context, the translanguaging approach was revolutionary¹³. Plurilingualism, on the other hand, was developed mainly in French-speaking contexts, and things don't generally move from French-medium literature to English-medium literature – it is usually the reverse.

The speakers of Polish coming to understand that they had knowledge of Slovak, which was mentioned earlier, is a good example of one difference between translanguaging and plurilingualism. That had nothing to do with translanguaging – but it is plurilingualism. The students were made aware of how much they knew in a language they had never met before, becoming aware of similarities with their language, international terms etc. The plurilingual approach adopted was to push the students to 'dare' to cross the barrier and enter into another language.¹⁴ Translanguaging, on the other hand, concerns

¹³ For the origins of translanguaging see: Lewis, G., Jones, B. & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7): 641–654. For a critique of the way it has been expanded to a theory see: Cummins, J. (2022). Evaluating Theoretical Constructs Underlying Plurilingual Pedagogies: The Role of Teachers as Knowledge- Generators and Agents of Language Policy. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-Rutherford & G. Lawrence (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 112-129). London and New York: Routledge, and/or Cummins (2022) *Rethinking the education of multilingual learners*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, Chapter 10.

For a discussion of plurilingualism and other lingualisms, see: Marshall, S. (2022). Plurilingualism and the tangled web of lingualisms. In E. Piccardo, G. Lawrence & A. Germain-Rutherford, *Routledge handbook of plurilingual language education* (pp. 46-64). London and New York: Routledge.

¹⁴ Chapter 5 in the case studies volume concerns another example of this type, this time with German-speaking students and Dutch: Jentges, S., Knopp, E., & Sars, P. (2022). Dutch for young speakers of German – a workshop on receptive multilingualism through cultural and linguistic landscaping. In B. North, E. Piccardo, T. Goodier, D. Fasoglio, R. Margonis, & B. Rüschoff (Eds.), (in press), *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR companion volume in practice* (pp. 95-108). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

For a broader view on and history of what is usually called *Intercomprehension*, see De Carlo, M. & Garbarino, S. (2022). Intercomprehension: strengths and opportunities of a pluralistic approach. In E. Piccardo, A. Germain-

the bilingual situation. The language of origin is used to help students be more successful, but students are not necessarily pushed beyond this objective. Spanish speakers in the USA, for example, could be brought to successfully learn French, but this is not the translanguaging perspective. Spanish is valued – but is not used to leverage other languages beyond English. This may be partly an issue of the Anglo context. For example, in a school in Louisiana, a teacher recently managed to get their Spanish-speaking students into classes for French. These Spanish-speaking students were very successful at French, far more so than their English-speaking colleagues; they were too good. The following year, considered just as English Language Learners (ELL), they were put back into their ELL classes. They could use their Spanish to help with their studies of content subjects, but there was no opening to other languages.

Plurilingualism is, as mentioned at the beginning, about attitudes, about openness. There is a strong cultural dimension to plurilingualism; in the CEFR, the term almost always comes as plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Translanguaging stays at the language level, usually between just two languages: language of origin and language of schooling.

Outcomes of the Workshop *From the case studies back to key concepts: improving language education*

In line with the purpose and expected outcomes specified in the concept note, a workshop was offered on the second day of the event. The workshop was moderated by Bernd Rüschoff (for English) and Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti (for French). The purpose of the workshop was to enable both participants on-site as well as those taking part online to reflect on the sessions offered at the conference, to exchange and share their perception on where they see the major contributions of the *CEFR Companion Volume* and its *Case Study Volume* to language education. This was part of the effort to fulfil the purpose of the conference, which was to:

- a) maintain the momentum for reflection and reform in language education [afforded] by the *CEFR Companion Volume* as well as the publication of the *Case Study Volume*
- b) as well as to value the contributions made by educators (in this case = participants and contributors to the *Case Study Volume*) when supporting the efforts of the Council of Europe in this field.

The question posed to breakout groups was intended to solicit inspiration of reflection by participants to further contribute to reform in language education and to inform the Council of Europe and its CEFR expert group as to potential areas of action needed. In the breakout groups, participants shared their thoughts to one Mentimeter board.

Altogether, 54 statements were posted to the Mentimeter, in an open question format. Based on these statements as well as on the moderators 'physically' monitoring the on-site groups, this report summarizes key areas that were addressed by the groups, with views expressed in the French track of the workshop integrated into the text, and with representative adapted quotes from posts integrated into the list that follows.

- 1) The **significance, role and impact of the *CEFR Companion Volume* is fully recognized** by participants. This is reflected by posts such as "The Companion Volume widens and specifies better the construct of communicative competence. Also it makes sign languages more visible

so they can be taught and assessed. Finally, it provides us with a better description of the phonological competences.” It is also seen as a starting point for reflection and rethinking practices, and its impact on curricula, the teaching/learning process and assessment in a wide range of educational contexts is well appreciated. The *CEFR Companion Volume* is seen as having a great impact on curricula, the teaching/learning process and assessment in a wide range of educational contexts.

- 2) The ***CEFR Companion Volume*** is also **seen as a stimulus for re-reflecting the role of teachers and learners as it has the potential to lead to increasing learner autonomy** as well as a changing of roles of teachers and learners with teachers taking the back seat. The notion of a need to ‘empower learners’ and foster ‘student agency’ by means of task-oriented and action-oriented activities is positively commented and referred to in a number of posts. An increase in true awareness of teachers’ practices and a further, more sustainable ‘shift in teacher roles’ is recognized.
- 3) The **action-oriented approach is valued and is seen as a fundamental paradigm in the *CEFR Companion Volume***. An action-oriented approach is seen as making learning more meaningful for teachers and learners. Some statements also see the *Companion Volume* contributing to an overdue real shift from a mere communicative approach to a [real-world grounded] action-oriented approach. This point is also referred to in the French posts, which consider the introduction of the action-oriented approach and plurilingualism in the classroom in terms of bringing learners' work closer to the real world. Such an approach is also seen as stimulating openness and curiosity about languages other than the target language.
- 4) The **potential role the *CEFR Companion Volume* will play in the fostering of digital (educational) literacy, including reflections of pandemic and post pandemic contexts, is recognized**. The *Companion Volume* addresses the issue of digital agency very nicely. Still, the question of how have the experiences during the pandemic affected learning or will they? needs to be explored. As one post states, “Students and teachers learned so much about digital agency. [We now need to explore] how can descriptors concerned with online interaction be used in this context?” In addition, the descriptors and case studies offer fertile ground for reflective teachers to adapt and innovate also via digital channels.
- 5) A **significant recognition of the importance of the ‘plurilingual stance’ can be observed together with welcoming the critical contribution of the *CEFR Companion Volume* to the ‘native speakerism’ issue**. This is best represented by the following (unedited) post “The native speaker is dead / importance of non-verbal language / language and plurilingual awareness for teachers and learners / give value to home languages / individual linguistic profile of each learner / inclusion, integration / ...”. French posts also see the *Companion Volume* as a good instrument for bringing out innovative solutions – e.g. multilingual *crèches* are mentioned, as are networks and communities of practice around the world - or for valuing minority languages.
- 6) The **benefits of re-thinking processes concerning the alignment of teaching/learning with more flexible approaches to assessment and evaluation** are addressed in a number of posts, e.g. by stating that there is a need to “distinguish better between assessment of, for, and as learning ...” This is also pointed out in the contributions to the French track of the workshop, in which the *CEFR Companion Volume* is first and foremost seen as an instrument for reorganising the learning progression, building a more coherent alignment between teaching, learning and assessment and making the last clearer.
- 7) Some of the posts indicate a clear and reflected **perception of mediation and its expanded (holistic) scope**. Still, a need for more initiatives to further raise teachers' awareness of mediation strategies is mentioned, as some are actually implementing mediation but they are not aware of this. Mediation is also seen as an essential contribution in some of the French

posts, with mediation regarded as adding a new dimension to classroom interaction and communication.

- 8) An **important initiative** to be taken is **suggested in terms of building action-research oriented communities** to reflect and show how descriptors can be linked with real-life classroom tasks and activities.
- 9) This relates to **posts that suggest a real need for further initiatives to support professional development** and teacher training as well as more networking of all professional communities.
- 10) Finally, a number of **posts identify the need to address stakeholders, including materials developers and policy makers** as key to ensuring that the practicality of a move to action-oriented, plurilingual education is fully recognized. This is also seen as key to ensuring that the principles embedded in the *CEFR Companion Volume* and exemplified in the *Case Study Volume* are actually reaching the grass-roots level. “What about the awareness of stakeholders?”, one post asks, while another post states: “We need to lure content providers/textbook writers/publishers.”

In summary, it can be said that – while the process and extent of the outcome of this type of workshop session needs more reflection – the experiment of providing a context for contributors and participants both on-site and online to collaboratively share views and comments via the workshop format as integrated into the conference was welcomed, and participants made good use of the tool (Mentimeter) provided.

Outcomes of the Round Table *How can we move language education forwards?*

Following the report on the workshop, described above, the conference was brought to an end with a second round table. This time the panel comprised Evelyn Bérard, Bessie Dendinos, Daniela Fasoglio, Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti, Waldemar Martyniuk and Bernd Rüschoff, and the discussion was moderated by Brian North, reflecting on ways in which the *CEFR Companion Volume* and the case studies could contribute to improving language education. Three main themes were discussed: supporting teachers in order to help them implement the shift implied action-oriented approach; the opportunities and challenges in this regard related to the current digital transition; and the transformative potential of mediation.

Implementing the action-oriented approach

How can we ensure that an action-based pedagogy is really understood and embraced by teachers, and helps to overcome traditional methodologies and approaches that are only superficially communicative?

It was pointed out that diffusion of new ideas is far easier now, with social media, short videos such as that shown on the social agent, online repositories of material, online and hybrid conferences, and the opportunities for networking – which also made it easier to identify and address grass roots issues. The modalities of ongoing teacher education were much improved.

However, the challenge in at least initial teacher education is to train people in a form of language teaching that has become more complex, to train them to integrate such complexity into their classroom, when they themselves have just come from a classroom that was not organized in this way. The issue is not really to pass on the concept of the action-oriented approach, student-teachers have little difficulty grasping this intellectually. The challenge is to manage to change the posture of the teacher who, in an action-oriented, plurilingual approach, after planning and organizing a learning environment should leave space for the learners to take responsibility for their learning and exert

agency. This entails the teacher accepting to cede power in the classroom and change the type of activities happening. This is more difficult.

With regard to ongoing professional development, we often expect change to come from teachers, but it is very difficult for teachers to achieve much in the way of innovation on their own. Many teachers do wonderful things, but there is only so much progress one can make on one's own as a pioneer. It is also very difficult when students move from the frontal teaching styles common in other subjects; switching the focus from teaching to learning that the action-oriented approach requires. The whole idea of taking a back seat while students perform tasks, has to happen in a wider community.

Avoiding the compartmentalization of languages is also an issue for whole school language policy. Thus a larger community, a broader group of stakeholders (e.g. policymakers, governments, the people who write attainment targets, text book writers), need to be convinced on the value of these changes. There is a greater than ever need to communicate. The task of the teacher has become more complex and what we have with the *CEFR Companion Volume* is a reference to describe the complexity of language teaching. There is a sense of urgency felt by many people in education, but everybody needs to be brought on board to effect the changes needed.

Top down approaches to implementing change (e.g. the royal decree in Spain on mediation in the Official Language Schools for adults) have their disadvantages, creating resistance, but in the end the change happens because it cannot be avoided. It is imperative to convince ministers of education of the value of such a paradigm change. Ideally, top down would meet bottom up experimentation, as in the Austrian example (see Footnote 9).

The opportunities and challenges of the digital transformation

*How can the concept of social agent be situated in the digital transformation that we are going through?
How can the "Action-oriented approach" be adapted to distance/online learning?*

The *CEFR Companion Volume* has, for the first time, expanded the scope of the kind of agencies to be acquired in order to act as a social agent in the real world. It is an example of the way in which the idea of communicative competence needs to be rethought from time to time, like the whole new skill set we now have with the *Companions Volume*, which reflects the reality of language use much better than the traditional four skills. Digital tools are much closer to students and teachers and this makes it far easier to authenticate their use. They broaden the scope of what is possible because the classroom is no longer confined to the physical room – one can reach out to the world, integrate the real world and empower learners to interact with the real world. The digital environment also has the advantage of offering a range of affordances to people who would otherwise perhaps not be given space to act as a social agent or mediator – for example gender roles do not exist in digitally-mediated interaction.

Perhaps there is a need for a modern, broader definition of literacy. In many, if not all, countries, there is at the moment a tension between on the one hand a renewed focus on the need for literacy in the language of schooling and administration and on the other hand the desire to value of multiple languages for education, qualifications and life in general. In the current climate, to become aware of the potential of languages of origin in the country needs a lot of courage because one needs methodologies that one did not have before. This involves looking for a new balance between literacy, as conceived in school programmes, and the space for students to develop their own first languages.¹⁵ The curricula and examinations for all levels of schooling in the Netherlands are currently in the process of being revised and this issue is one of the topics being discussed: What is the place of the plurilingual repertoire of the student compared to the need to be able to communicate adequately in society? In

¹⁵ For a summary of research showing that development of literacy in the student's first language substantially facilitates the acquisition of literacy in the language of schooling, see: Cummins (2022) *Rethinking the education of multilingual learners*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

this discussion, social agency has an important place because one wants citizens who can make sense of the world with the language that they have and which they develop.

Professors sometimes complain that the increase in the use of digital tools has led to a decline in face-to-face communication, but on the other hand, that the scope and intensity of the communication has been dramatically magnified by their use. They say young people do not read (literature) and cannot write (creatively), yet this digital interaction involves constant, vibrant reading and writing. One student in the case study on online interaction in Italy¹⁶ was quoted as saying: “Wow, that’s the first real interaction that I have had in this language.” Many believe that digital interaction is the social new normal.

The project reported on in the case studies volume being celebrated here is actually the first of three projects. The second, which was a follow up, was a collaboration with Enrica Piccardo and the University of Toronto in the online use of action-oriented scenarios and an electronic portfolio to implement action-oriented lessons during the distance teaching of the pandemic. Four languages were used continuously during the project that involved 100 teachers at all school levels.¹⁷ In the project, students were the protagonists, using scenarios co-created by the students, acting as agents in this new way of learning. Now things are moving to a third phase with more student agency, with the students deciding how to implement the steps in the didactic sequence of the framework given by the scenario.

The Italian project also suggested that, although some teachers were technophobes before the Covid pandemic, students are not as proficient as one might imagine; they are very good with social media but not naturally so good with the web or at interacting effectively online. Teachers and students are different in their digital use and competence but the gap between them is not that big, it is more a question of language. And the *CEFR Companion Volume* is a tool that helps these two worlds (teachers, students) to communicate effectively.

Mediation

Should “mediation” be understood just as a fourth mode of language communication, a combination of the other modes reception, production, interaction, or should it also be viewed in a broader way as a key competence for the 21st century?

Contributions from the panel made clear that mediation is more than just passing on information, and a holistic understanding of mediation is relevant to both classroom practice and real-world interactional practices. Mediation seen as “negotiation of meaning¹⁸” links both classroom and real-world-practice, and this was identified as an aspect that needs to be researched more intensively. Current observations of mediational practices suggest that this is a key competence in its own right, and it should be very much regarded as a key social practice. This holistic understanding and interpretation of mediation very much relates mediation with the concept of the “learner as a social agent” as embedded in the *CEFR Companion Volume*.

It was therefore suggested that an exciting path is opening up with mediation. The inclusion of the mediation descriptors, that many of those present were involved in validating, in the *CEFR Companion Volume* is an important beginning that enables an advancement in this area. The descriptors do not come from primary ethnographic studies, but without their articulation of the concept, it is not likely

¹⁶ Langé, G., Cinganotto, L., & Benedetti, F. (2022). Focus on online interaction: A pilot project in Italy. In B. North, E. Piccardo, T. Goodier, D. Fasoglio, R. Margonis, & B. Rüschoff (Eds.), (in press), *Enriching 21st century language education: The CEFR companion volume in practice* (pp. 143-154). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

¹⁷ Piccardo, E., Langé, G., Schmor, R., Scholze, A., & Noel, K. (forthcoming). *Classe plurilingue e approccio orientato all’azione*. Perugia: Guerra editore.

¹⁸ Dendrinis, B. (Ed.) (forthcoming). *Linguistic mediation in the context of plurilingual education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

that the current movement would have started. Studies are now needed in relation to what young students are actually doing when, for example, they act as an intermediary, or (with regard to a new project at the Research Centre at the University of Athens) when they intervene to prevent bullying at school. Such studies will help to better interpret and more closely relate and contextualize the descriptors in the *CEFR Companion Volume* to actual practice.

As to current initiatives related to the integration of mediation into school curricula, it was stressed that mediation should not be defined as a mere 'blended skill,' which would also carry the danger of being misrepresented and misinterpreted in approaches to assessment procedures.

Current research and development initiatives concerned with curriculum development address issues as to whether to embed aspects of mediation in the ensemble of language competences and strategies or whether to identify separate aims and targets concerned with mediation in both language learning contexts and learning contexts in general. This would suggest the perception of mediation as a learning goal in itself, as it also incorporates aspects of monitoring and self-reflecting communicational and interactional practices.

Finally, it was stressed that the *CEFR Companion Volume* descriptors address aspects of social agency as well as overall "citizenship" and should be addressed through a cross-curricular approach. It could be included across the curriculum and not just in language classes, harmonizing language curricula and the curricula of other school subjects.

APPENDIX : CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Session 1 – Tuesday, 24 May 2022 / 14.00-18.00 CET, Room G.03
 and [KUDO](#). (With interpretation in English and French)

13.30 – 14.00	Registration
14.00 – 14.30	Opening
14.00 – 14.10	Welcome and introduction Ahmet Murat KILIÇ, Programme Manager, Education Policy Division
14.10 – 14.30	Promoting action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department
14.30 – 16.00	The CEFR Companion volume Moderator: Daniela FASOGLIO, SLO (Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development)
14.30 – 14.35	Opening Daniela FASOGLIO
14.35 – 14.55	What does the CEFR Companion Volume consist of? Brian NORTH, Formerly Eurocentres Foundation, formerly Chair of Equals
15.00 – 15.20	Les volume complémentaire : qu'y a-t-il de nouveau pour l'enseignement des langues Evelyne BERARD, Formerly Director of Centre de linguistique appliquée de Besançon
15.25 – 15.45	La médiation et l'apprenant comme acteur social plurilingue Enrica PICCARDO, University of Toronto
15.50 – 16.10	The learner as social agent and the affordances of digital spaces Bernd RÜSCHOFF, Duisburg-Essen University
16.10 – 16.40	Break (sending questions to Roundtable panel)
16.40 – 17.20	Roundtable: The key messages of the CEFR Companion volume Moderator: Waldemar MARTYNIUK, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland Panel: Evelyne BÉRARD, Daniela FASOGLIO, Brian NORTH, Enrica PICCARDO
17.40	Announcements The conference programme and organisation for Day 2
17.30	End of Day 1

Session 2 – Wednesday, 25 May 2022 / 09.00-12.00

CET

09.00 – 12.00	The CEFR Companion volume in practice – Presentations	Breakout room II (with interpretation) Room G.03 and KUDO (French/English) Moderator: Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI, Haute école pédagogique Lausanne	Breakout room I (no interpretation) Room G.02 and Blue Jeans (English) Moderator: Enrica PICCARDO
09.00 – 09.05	Opening Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI	Opening Enrica PICCARDO	
09.05 – 09.20	Multimédia : La médiation multilingue dans le cadre d'un projet de stage en entreprise Antonella FANARA, Licéo Giovanni Falcone, Bergamo, Italy	Action toolkit for teacher training on mediation Inma PEDREGOSA, University of Roehampton, UK, Adolfo SÁNCHEZ CUADRADO, University of Granada, Spain	
09.20 – 09.30	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
09.30 – 09.45	La tâche comme moteur de promotion du plurilinguisme Hélène MARTINEZ, Université de Gießen, Germany	Implementing plurilingual oral exams Belinda STEINHUBER, CEBS (Center für berufsbezogene Sprachen), Austria	
09.45 – 09.55	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
09.55 – 10.10	Discours d'enseignants au sujet d'activités qui relèvent de la médiation Mónica BASTOS and Maria DE LURDES GONÇALVES, Camões / Université d'Aveiro, Portugal, Joaquim Prazeres, Camões, I.P., Portugal, Angélique Quintus and Roberto Gómez Fernández, ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse (MENJE), Luxembourg	In Venlo gibt es viel Niederländisch, aber auch Englisch und Deutsch: Receptive plurilingualism in the neighbour language Sabine JENTGES, Eva M. KNOPP, and Paul SARS, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, The Netherlands	
10.10 – 10.20	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
10.20 – 10.35	L'exploitation des compétences plurilingues dans le cadre des	CEFR mediation strategies: Towards a socio-emotionally	

	formations linguistiques dispensées aux adultes Sophie ADLER, Achraf DORBOZ and Darius VANHONNAEKER, Bell Suisse	enhanced plurilingual language education Maria Carmen FONSECA-MORA, University of Huelva, Spain, Maria GONZALEZ DAVIES, University Ramon Llull, Barcelona, Spain; Maria-Teresa Berceruelo, Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Granada, Spain; Esther Cores-Bilbao, Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Ayamonte, Spain
10.35 – 10.45	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>
10.45 – 11.15	Break	
11.15 – 12.00	Breakout room II (with interpretation) Room G.03 and KUDO (English/French) Moderator: Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI	Breakout room I (no interpretation) Room G.02 and Blue Jeans (English) Moderator: Enrica PICCARDO
11.15 – 11.30	The sixth sense for literature: A new pluricultural approach to literary texts as mediation and reaction to literature Elena NUVOLONI and Silvia ZANETTI, Liceo Linguistico di Stato – Giovanni Falcone, Bergamo, Italy	Implementation of the CEFR Companion Volume in the UNCert® and NULTE Networks Johann FISCHER and Nicole WOLDER, Georg August University, Göttingen, Germany
11.30 – 11.40	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>
11.40 – 11.55	Promoting and assessing the appreciation of literature at secondary school Nadia PRIONI, Liceo Statale Giorgio Spezia, Domodossola, Italy	Exploring teachers' beliefs and practices about phonology with reference to the CEFR descriptors Mutlu Işıl ERGUN, Hande Işıl MENGÜ and Elif ŞEN, Bilkent University, Turkey
11.55 – 12.00	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>
12.00	End of Session 2	

Session 3 – Wednesday, 25 May 2022 / 13.30-14.50 CET

13.00 – 14.50	Breakout room II (with interpretation) Room G.03 and KUDO (English/French) Moderator: Bernd RÜSCHOFF	Breakout room I (no interpretation) Room G.02 and Blue Jeans (English) Moderator: Daniela FASOGLIO
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13.30 – 13.35	Introduction Bernd RÜSCHOFF	Introduction Daniela FASOGLIO
13.35 – 13.50	Focus on online interaction: A pilot project in Italy Fausto BENEDETTI and Letizia CINGANOTTO, INDIRE (National Institute for documentation, Innovation and Research), Italy; Gisella LANGÉ, MIUR (Ministry of Education), Italy	Representations of mediation in foreign language education: An explorative case study with different stakeholders Christian HELMCHEN and Sílvia MELO-PFEIFER, University of Hamburg, Germany
13.50 – 14.00	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>
14.00 – 14.15	Learning by doing: Putting the CEFR descriptors for online interaction and mediation into practice by teacher trainees Agnieszka GADOMSKA, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Poland	Application of Companion volume descriptors in CLIL settings Emma ABBATE, Liceo Statale Alessandro Manzoni, Caserta, Italy
14.15 – 14.25	<i>Questions from the floor</i>	<i>Questions from the floor</i>
14.25 – 14.40		The role of contextual factors in the implementation of mediation descriptors with Higher Education language learners Joaquín CRUZ TRAPERO, University of Jaén, Spain; Susana LORENZO-ZAMORANO, University of Manchester, UK; Marga NAVARRETE, University College London, UK; Lucía PINTADO GUTIÉRREZ, Dublin City University, Ireland; Adolfo SÁNCHEZ CUADRADO, University of Granada, Spain
14.40 – 14.50		<i>Questions from the floor</i>
14.50-15.20	Break and end of Session 3	Break and end of Session 3

Session 4 – Wednesday, 25 May 2022 / 15.20-18.00 CET

15.20 – 17.00	Workshop	
15.20 – 16.20	Breakout room I (no interpretation) Room G.03 and Blue Jeans (French)	Breakout room II (no interpretation) Room G.02 and Blue Jeans (English)

	Des études de cas aux concepts clés : améliorer l'enseignement des langues Moderator: Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI	From the case studies back to key concepts: improving language education Moderator: Bernd RÜSCHOFF
16.30 – 17.00	Reports from the workshop and discussion Room G.03 and KUDO (with interpretation) Moderators: Bernd RÜSCHOFF and Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI	
17.00 – 17.10	Video: Operationalising the concept of the learner as a social agent in the classroom Room G.03 and KUDO (with subtitles in French) Arianna CAPUTO, Anna SPRINGER, Berrie de ZEEUW	
17.10 – 17.50	Roundtable: How can we move language education forwards? Room G.03 and KUDO (with interpretation) Moderator: Brian NORTH Panel: Evelyn BÉRARD, Bessie DENDRINOS, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, Daniela FASOGLIO Rosanna MARGONIS-PASINETTI, Waldemar MARTYNIUK, Bernd RÜSCHOFF	
17.50	Closing remarks Room G.03 and KUDO (with interpretation) Michael REMMERT, Head of the Education Policy Division	
18.00	End of the Conference	