Mediation in FL learning: From translation to translatoriality

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ABSTRACT

In this conceptual paper we look at the concept of mediation in foreign language learning from a translation studies perspective. Through an analysis of the most important European language teaching policy document, namely the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), we will study the conceptualizations of mediation and translation in the CEFR and identify elements that are important with respect to understanding translatoriality and its role in the framework. We argue that a narrow concept of translation goes against CEFR's explicit aims of mediation. We therefore propose that the concept of *translatoriality* might be used instead to help teachers and learners orient to a wide variety of translatorial mediation practices while still also benefitting from well-established and widely studied strategies of professional translation and interpreting. Further collaboration between translation and interpreting trainers and foreign language teachers will be needed, as well as fieldwork research on best classroom practices, and a solid and shared conceptual basis will enhance the possibilities of combining the accumulating findings collected through fieldwork.

Keywords: mediation, translation, translatoriality, translanguaging, intercultural competence, language learning, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

Posredovanje pri učenju tujega jezika: od prevajanja do prevajalskosti

IZVLEČEK

V tem konceptualnem članku z vidika prevodoslovja obravnavava pojem posredovanja pri učenju tujega jezika. Skozi analizo najosnovnejšega evropskega dokumenta, ki opredeljuje strategijo poučevanja jezika, to je Skupni evropski jezikovni okvir (SEJO), bova razčlenili konceptualizacijo posredovanja in prevajanja v SEJO in identificirali elemente, ki so pomembni za razumevanje prevajalskosti in njene vloge v tem okviru. Zagovarjava stališče, da je ozko razumevanje pojma prevajanje v nasprotju z eksplicitnimi cilji posredovanja, kot se uporablja v okviru SEJO. Zato predlagava, da bi namesto tega uporabljali pojem *prevajalskost*, ki bi učiteljem in učencem pomagal smiselno umestiti široko paleto različnih prevodnih posredovalnih praks, hkrati pa bi še vedno lahko črpal iz dobro utemeljene in raziskane prakse strokovnega prevajanja in tolmačenja. Nujna bosta dodatno sodelovanje med učitelji prevajanja in tolmačenja ter učitelji tujih jezikov, pa tudi terenske raziskave najboljših praks v razredu, utemeljena in skupna konceptualna zasnova pa bo prispevala k izboljšanju možnosti kombiniranja dognanj, pridobljenih skozi terensko delo.

Ključne besede: posredovanje, prevajanje, prevodljivost, čezjezičnost, medkulturna kompetenca, učenje jezikov, Skupni evropski jezikovni okvir

In this conceptual paper we look at the concept of mediation in foreign language learning from a translation studies perspective. Through an analysis of the policy documents defining the most important European language teaching policy document, namely the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), we will analyse the conceptualizations of mediation and translation in the CEFR and identify elements that are important with respect to understanding translatoriality and its role in the framework. We argue that a narrow concept of translation goes against CEFR's explicit aims of mediation. We therefore propose that the concept of *translatoriality* might be used instead to help teachers and learners orient to a wide variety of translatorial mediation practices while still also benefitting from well-established and widely studied practices of professional translation and interpreting. Further collaboration between translation and interpreting trainers and foreign language teachers will be needed, as well as fieldwork research on best classroom practices, and a solid and shared conceptual basis will enhance the possibilities of combining the accumulating findings collected through fieldwork.

1. Introduction

Translation Studies (TS) as a discipline has long been focusing on professional translators and interpreters, and ideologically married to advancing their status and promoting their role in society. This has been and still is a worthwhile mission for TS scholars, but there are also other areas of significant societal relevance where the accumulated wisdom of translation and interpreting research can be used to support the creation of sustainable multilingual societies. In this conceptual position paper we focus on the area of foreign (FL) and second language learning (L2). More specifically, this paper looks at the concept of *mediation* in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR 2020), a tool designed by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Education Newsroom 2020) "to protect linguistic and cultural diversity, promote plurilingual and intercultural education, reinforce the right to quality education for all, and enhance intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and democracy." Intercultural dialogue at the core of the CEFR can be seen to echo key European values and to foster democratic citizenship in diverse societies. At the same time, the mediation model represented in the CEFR has developed parallel to some other similar initiatives elsewhere, for example the intercultural capability in Australia (Scarino 2013), and can be seen to reflect the challenges created by increasingly plurilingual and "superdiverse" societies. As European scholars we take a local European perspective, and in our empirical part will analyse the descriptors of mediation in the CEFR model. As Finnish scholars, we also acknowledge our Nordic and small language background,

which may easily affect our preconceived notions on issues such as native teacher ideology, plurilingualism and heterogeneousness in classrooms. Tacit assumptions such as these need to be made more explicit in research literature. In a peripheral national context, foreign language teachers are predominantly working on their L2 and share the linguacultural background of non-immigrant learners. Finnish classrooms have become more heterogeneous and more plurilingual only during the 21st century, and the languages being taught are still predominantly foreign for all (as most new languages are not taught in formal education). Although Finland is a bilingual country, the ideology of separate education paths has kept classrooms relatively monolingual in either Finnish or Swedish. Finally, teaching is a highly regarded profession in Finland, and teachers are required to have MA-level education. This endows them with prestige and room for independent pedagogical decision-making.

The first *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* document was published in 2001. Already in 2001, plurilingual[1] and pluricultural competences were recognized as essential aims to promote, and one of the framework's explicit pedagogical purposes was defined as educating the personality of the learner in facing otherness (CEFR 2001, 1). The European framework aims at educating social agents who can act in a multilingual and multicultural society. Mediational skills are needed more and more, and language classrooms usually have learners with a variety of linguistic backgrounds and other individual, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic differences. The companion volume of the most recent version of the framework (CEFR 2020) laments that the first framework (2001) did not reach the wished influence since the role of mediation was not discussed at length and in its full potential. It has also been argued that "the interpretation of mediation in the CEFR [2001] has tended to be reduced to interpretation and translation" (CEFR 2020, 34), which has often been understood just as a process of linguistic reformulation, although the aim is rather that learners would practice helping each other to clarify, to explain better, and to enhance their divergent perspectives to reach better understanding among participants in interaction (Coste and Cavalli 2015, 62). This broader understanding of mediation as translation is at the heart of this article.

We propose that a translation studies perspective to how translation, mediation and intercultural competence are understood in the framework may help in reaching the

1 "The concept of plurilingual competence refers to the Council of Europe's standard distinction between plurilingualism and multilingualism: plurilingualism is the ability to use more than one language – and accordingly sees languages from the standpoint of speakers and learners. Multilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the presence of several languages in a given geographical area, regardless of those who speak them. In other words, the presence of two or more languages in an area does not necessarily imply that people in that area can use several of them; some use only one" (Guide 2016, 20).

goals set for language learners. We provide a conceptual analysis of how mediation as a tool to support intercultural dialogue is understood in the CEFR documents, and argue that a wide-ranging concept of *translatoriality* (as opposed to narrow interpretations of translating and interpreting) will be beneficial to defining and enhancing the mediation competences the framework targets. Translatoriality, we believe, will serve to capture not only instances of reverbalizing full texts and complete utterances in a new language, but also the more fragmentary reiteration of the already said or written in a new way, either by the same person (i.e. self-translation) or someone else. In this conceptual work and terminology proposal we respond to a call made by Lucia Pintado Gutiérrez (2018) to reassess the borders of translation in the language classroom and to develop alternative conceptualizations for mapping them. We also aim to advance the discussion by explicitly taking on the concept of mediation that her mapping exercise did not include. Finally, we move on to the thorny issue of assessment, an unavoidable part of most language learning contexts. As the common European framework is also an assessment system, we will also discuss what kinds of issues arise in assessing translatoriality and mediation skills. We propose that tacit and potentially contrasting translation concepts are one core challenge to teaching innovations and the transparent assessment of mediation. The concept of translatoriality could be used as a new tool for identifying and appreciating flexible and goal-oriented translation practices.

In this article, we join a growing number of voices in seeking common ground between TS and FL/SL learning (see, e.g., Laviosa 2014; González-Davies 2018; Stachl-Peier and Schwarz 2020). What we add to existing research is 1) the concept of translatoriality, 2) a close reading of the CEFR documents, and 3) a perspective of language learning across the spectrum of the learning process (rather than focusing on university-level FL teaching). Our particular interest here is to look at the CEFR mediation descriptors through the lens of implicit or explicit translation concepts and translatoriality. Offering a new conceptualization is a deliberate choice. Reading the existing literature on mediation, both from translation studies side and language acquisition side, it becomes evident that the emerging – typically undefined – translation concept is not always identical, and in many cases quite narrow. The same problem has also been identified more generally:

> Our language-related fields of research are thus deeply divided since the assumptions and conclusions of the different approaches are so incompatible that scholarly discussion is difficult or impossible. The customary call for more research and more data that might allow arbitration between the positions will not work as long as there is no agreement on the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological presuppositions of such

> research. No shared rules are in place, and shared rules are necessary to arbitrate. Simply gathering more empirical evidence without sorting out the conceptual issues will not suffice to overcome the intra-and interdisciplinary divides. (Berthele 2020, 82)

Raphael Berthele's comment on the different understandings of the concept of multilingualism resembles what we have identified in the case of translation. A similar observation has been made by others. Pintado Gutiérrez (2018, 1) urges us to "acknowledge the frequently ignored reality of quite different forms and types of translation in the language classroom thus clarifying one of the prime struggles: the meaning and the role of 'translation' in FL pedagogy". The confusion of what translation is and should be in language learning remains both among TS and language learning scholars and among teachers. One outcome of a DGT study with 57 expert respondents and 896 L2 teachers identified a need to distinguish between translation and code-switching (Pym et al. 2013, 36). We propose the concept of translatoriality as one way to clarify the conceptual network.

2. Translatoriality

Translatoriality presupposes that something is repeated, reworded, revoiced, or recommunicated. In other words, there is a pre-existing communicative element that gives rise to a new one, either in full or in part, and either aiming to recommunicate the same intent or not. Koskela et al. (2017, 2) define translatoriality as "a characteristic feature of multilingual communication in which a message carrier in one language can be identified as originating from a message carrier in another language. A defining feature of translatorial communication is that there are two message carriers present and they have a relationship of relevant similarity with each other." Many TS readers will recognize "relevant similarity" from similar definitions of translation, and indeed, translatoriality *is* translation, in a sense broad enough to cover the multitude of everyday occurrences. Translatoriality is intended as a lens through which it becomes easier to discern how overwhelmingly translatorial life is. Entirely monolingual contexts are rare.

The term "message carrier" also signals a source of inspiration: Justa Holz-Mänttäri's (1984) theory of translatorial action and its broad conceptualization of *professional* translation is here taken on to also explain other instances translatorial action in all kinds of communicative situations (for a fuller account, see Koskinen 2017). Our approach also builds on the long-standing arguments of Brian Harris (1977) on natural translation, acknowledging translatorial action as both an innate ability of all plurilingual speakers, and a communicative skill that can be taught and learned. The rise of

non-professional translation research and increasingly also the study of work-related paraprofessional translation (e.g., Koskela et al. 2017; Piekkari et al. 2020) are parallel tendencies where the concept of translatoriality can be used to identify and discuss translatorial practices which the participants themselves do not necessarily label as such. The rising interest in paraprofessional translatorial practices at work also highlights mediation as an employability issue, raising its status on the current political agenda and strengthening its relevance in the CEFR.

Translatoriality as a term arose from a very pragmatic need to define the object of study in contexts where the traditional 'translation' and 'interpreting' did not work, and it has proven its usefulness in several research contexts that go beyond prototypical professional translation practices. We do recognize that some scholars may prefer differentiating between translation 'proper' and other types of plurilingual practices with a translatorial element. Pintado Gutiérrez (2018, 7), for example, focuses on "the need to define the construct of pedagogical translation as a valid category of translation in the FL classroom different to code-switching and other neighboring concepts". While it is no doubt useful to always have conceptual and terminological clarity, our argument is in direct opposition to theirs. The question of how and to what extent translation can be used to support introducing mediation elements in L2 teaching is open to many interpretations and dependent on how prototypical or flexible the translation concept of each participant is (see also Berthele 2020). We argue that a narrow concept of translation -- internalized by many teachers and students alike -- goes against the explicit aims of mediation. The translation concept is a mental construct, and it may be very difficult to change the preconceived understandings of it. Successful mediation will in most cases be severely hampered if the translation concept employed is, for example, based on rigid notions of literal equivalence. Employing a new overarching term offers a possibility for reconceptualizing. Pintado Gutiérrez (2018, 229) cites Kelly and Bruen (2014, 15) as follows:

> It should be highlighted that the lecturer avoided the use of the word 'translate' or 'translation' when using TILT [translation in language teaching], favouring instead expressions such as 'If this book was published in English, what would it be called' or 'what would be a suitable slogan for this advertisement if it were to appear in an Irish newspaper'. By avoiding the word 'translate', the lecturer felt that students went beyond rewriting the L2 task in the L1, and approached it from an angle that considered L1 register, style and expression.

According to Pintado Gutiérrez, this is an indication of a negative perception of translation as a damaging and unwanted element in the classroom. This may be the

case, and the bad reputation of translation may have a role to play in the proliferation of new terms. However, another reading might highlight the teacher's awareness that using the term 'translation' would activate a reductionist concept of translation in the students' minds, and that choosing other verbalizations of the desired translatoriality may lead to better results.

Translatoriality is only one of the terms that have been offered to cover the non-prototypical end of the translation continuum. The term code-switching has already come up above. It can be seen to cover partially the same ground as translatoriality in the sense that some code-switching practices repeat *overlapping* content, but not extend to such code-switching where languages or codes are used in *parallel* to one another (Kolehmainen et al. 2015). Code-switching typically refers to alteration in one speaker's utterances, thus highlighting the role of self-translatoriality in many contexts beyond professional translating and interpreting.

Translanguaging is a more recent neologism. A derivative of languaging – that is, the use of language to discuss language use – translanguaging has acquired many meanings. In the broader end of the spectrum, it is used to describe the transformative and creative merging of "different language resources in situated interaction for meaning construction" ("code-meshing" Canagarajah 2013, 1–2), and seen to cover both translation and code-switching, and beyond (Pintado Gutiérrez 2018). Translanguaging practice is seen as creative and transformative, not mechanistic (Baynham and King Lee 2019). In this broad sense, it could be seen as an over-arching term that covers all kinds of plurilingual, pluricultural and pluricodal communicative practices, and both overlapping (i.e., translatory) and parallel usage of different codes. This translates into teaching and learning through the concept of plurilingual communicative competence (González-Davies 2018, 2020).

Vallejo and Dooly (2020, 2) list recent terminological suggestions put forward to capture language practices of contemporary multilingual lives. They list "plurilingual modes, heteroglossia, languaging, translingual practices, translanguaging, transglossia, crossing, codemeshing, polylanguaging, metrolingualism and transidiomatic practices" and argue that this proliferation of new terms "reflects a generalized interest – and excitement even – for acknowledging and theoretically operationalizing the complexity of language use in an increasingly connected and globalized world". In our understanding, promoters of translanguaging and other neologisms share our view of needing a broader understanding of translatorial practices in the classroom. Our preference for translatoriality as a key term stems from a desire to broaden *within limits*: translanguaging and other terms tend to cover areas of multilingual practices beyond translatorial relations, and we propose translatoriality as a clarifying term for

identifying, analysing, teaching, learning and assessing particular practices within a wider spectrum of operating across and within several linguistic codes.

While the CEFR understanding of mediation is not limited to translatorial activities, these do, however, represent a large subset (see below). We believe that the theory and praxis of professional translation and interpreting can provide a wealth of support in FL and SL learning as well, but the further we move away from situations where some aim towards targeted repetition can be discerned the less useful they are. The creative, situational and momentary nature of translanguaging practices also limits their teachability and assessability, creating some tension to its applicability as an overarching term for teaching and learning multilingual mediation skills. Translatoriality aims to straddle the middle ground between prototypical translation and open-ended translanguaging.

In the CEFR, plurilingual communicative competence is discussed through the concept of mediation. While mediation is about in-betweenness, and mediating for others, translatoriality often also manifests in self-translation of bilingual participants themselves, as they switch between codes and provide partial of summarizing translations of their own verbalizations (Koskela et al. 2017). Translatoriality is also not restricted to purposes of comprehension but can take place in contexts where all share the same language resources, and can be a source of, for example, identity display, emphasis, or humour (Kolehmainen et al. 2015).

3. Translation in language learning

The reputation of using translation as a method of language learning has varied: the former friends and then enemies have recently been described as "strangers" (Bazani 2019). What used to be standard feature of language classrooms became, from the 1970s onwards, an old-fashioned and frowned upon relic that was seen to sit uneasily with the communitive aims and monolingual ideals of modern language teaching (for an overview, see Pintado Gutiérrez 2018; Laviosa 2014, 4–24; González-Davies 2020, 435–437). Concurrently, the expanding university education of professional translators and interpreters, and the budding new field of translation studies, were building their distinctive identity within university contexts and needed to forcefully differentiate themselves from traditional language departments and translation as grammar learning methods. Contempt toward what was seen as misuse of translation in contextless rote learning was a way of owning the teaching of translation, and the production of translation professionals, in the new division of academic labour.

As several translation scholars have recently argued, however, it is time for translation to return to L2 classrooms (e.g., Pym and Ayvazyan 2017, 402; Koletnik and Frœlinger

2019; Floros 2020). This process is also already well under way, and researchers are talking about a multilingual, pluricultural or translation turn in second language acquisition (Pintado Gutiérrez 2018). The "comeback" (ibid.) of translation is not a return to old grammar translation, though. So called pedagogical translation was first proposed already in the 1980s as a way of testing foreign language competence, and subsequently developed into various tasks and modes of operation that either students or the teacher can use to facilitate learning. Pintado Gutiérrez (2018, 14) summarizes the development of translation in L2 learning as follows:

> The more translation is interpreted as involving communication and intercultural competence, the more favourable the attitude toward it among both researchers and teachers and the less conceptually opposed it is to language learning. In other words, at heart, terminological issues drive whether and how the use of translation in the FL classroom is valued.

In other words, the more mechanistic the translation concept, the less it is seen to support the communicative and interactional aims of language pedagogy. And conversely, the more intercultural and mediation competence is foregrounded, the more potential relevance translation has, given that it is conceptualized in ways that enhance and foreground its creative, flexible, and transformative elements. This is the 21st century direction of several directive framework documents on language learning (Scarino 2010), the CEFR included.

4. Mediation

4.1 Mediation as a practice

If we look at the use of *mediation* in the ordinary language without the attribute *linguistic* or *intercultural*, we will notice that already the word as such involves a meaning that there is a person who is mediating something to someone. This person functions as an intermediate agent (intermediary) between participants of an activity. However, this agent must not be a human agent; it can also be a medium for transmission between something or some people, for example in physics or medicine. The meaning of mediation can thus be a very instrumental one. Still, it is typical that mediation takes place between human agents, and these agents are often disagreeing on something, or even in a conflict.

In their more specialized language use, interaction researchers consider mediation "as a range of actions able to change interactional patterns by managing the ways in which

the parties address each other" (Baraldi 2012, 66; referring to Heritage and Clayman 2010). A professional mediator often takes the role in-between the disputants i.e., starts mediating in the dispute between the parties. Their activity can be described as a form of institutional third-party conflict management, but it can also be understood as an activity to promote the active participation of all actors in a communication situation (Baraldi 2012, 68). It is noticeable that this kind of intervention is indirect; mediation happens through the mediating agent acting in agentic ways – and not for example in a way that is prescribed for professional interpreters in professional codes of conduct, as an invisible and neutral agent (more the role of a medium than of a mediator), rendering what is said *as directly as possible* between interlocutors, without manipulation of the meaning, and not influencing the primary participants in any further way than by changing the language. The mediator actively seeks to resolve a conflict between the actors who are not able to settle their dispute themselves due to misunderstanding and helps actively to facilitate reciprocal communication. All communication participants are normally aware of the active supporting role of the professional mediator and their expectations thus also guide the process.

In various professional communication contexts, the line between these two social practices, i.e., professional interpreting and professional mediation, can be drawn very sharply, at least on a theoretical level (Pokorn and Mikolič Južnič 2020). In the context of the CEFR the strict professional conceptualizations give way to a flexible blending of intermediary activities (both the active coordination of the communication and the choice of what is said and how it is said as well as the knowledge of cultural expectations) in language learning contexts that utilize forms of translatoriality and in which linguistic performance has typically not reached the highest levels of acting professionals.

4.2 Intercultural mediation in translator and interpreter professions

In translation studies, *intercultural mediation* is understood as "a form of translatorial intervention which takes account of the impact of cultural distance when translating or interpreting" (Katan 2013, 84). According to this view, when a translator or an interpreter presumes a possible cultural misunderstanding, they are expected to support the communication to respect the differences so that the meanings expressed do not get lost or distorted. The translator or the interpreter makes an intervention and tries "to ensure successful communication across cultures" (Katan 2013, 84). Although there are strict professional restrictions for the purposes of not manipulating original messages in any way (e.g., in court testimonies, see e.g., Merlini 2009, 59), a successful act of linguistic meaning conveyance presupposes supportive intercultural

mediation. This activity can take the form of manifold modifications of the linguistic structure or even a change of medium. Modifications are also often necessary due to differences in linguistic practices, as in cultural presuppositions, and as such are not expected to cause a manipulation of sense. In other words, translators or interpreters as active agents are expected to recognize what is needed in the communicative situation to make it accessible for all parties.

While intercultural competence (Tomozeiu et al. 2016) has been identified as one core competence of translators and interpreters, and intercultural mediation is recognized as a core element of translatorial action, this mediation role is also seen as potentially problematic as it implies agentic roles that go beyond linguistic repetition. Public service interpreting has been the arena of the most heated debates, particularly in terms of the division of labour between public service interpreters and *intercultural mediators* (Merlini 2009; Baraldi and Gavioli 2016; Pokorn and Mikolič Južnič 2020).

For our present purposes the intercultural mediators are of particular interest, as their role seem to contain many features and the blurring of translation boundaries similar to the aims of the CEFR. Acting as an intercultural mediator can, for example, include the following tasks: linguistic-cultural interpretation, translation of documents and information material, accompanying migrants to public offices and agencies, house calls and community work with migrants (Merlini 2009, 61). *Interpreter-mediated communication* is narrower in its remit and limited to triadic interaction only. As mediation enters the foreign language classrooms, the danger of everyday misunderstanding and controversy among the public that Franz Pöchhacker (2008, 9, 21) has identified will likely increase, if the professional practice of community interpreting is not clearly distinguished from an intercultural mediation process that primarily aims to help migrants and authorities in public service communication situations.

As a social interaction researcher, Claudio Baraldi (2017) considers public service interpreting to be a form of social mediation that enhances the inclusion of migrants. He compares interpreter-mediated interaction to the monolingual social mediation that also takes place in a triadic exchange among the participants. According to Baraldi (2017, 368), in a monolingual conflict "[m]ediation involves introducing a third perspective to a dyadic interaction, with the explicit aim of facilitating communication between two conflicting parties and recontextualizing it into a more positive form of relationship." Baraldi refers to Pöchhacker (2008) and states that conflict mediation and public service interpreting should not be confused since they are not the same activities and the agent roles are different. However, both roles include active facilitating of communication between other parties, and interpreting is seldom manageable without some mediating elements that should not be treated as occurrences of

unprofessionalism but as part of the interaction (Baraldi 2017, 369). To conclude, it is necessary to examine what kind of mediators are expected to take the role of a mediator, and how the adopted professional ideology and public understanding of the role affect their own understanding of the communicative task. Importantly, mediating communication across cultural divides also manifests in 'purely' linguistic practices as cultural differences are often highlighted though language use (Baraldi 2017, 370).

An interculturally competent translator has recently been defined as a person "that demonstrates a high level of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitude and flexibility throughout his or her professional engagements" (Tomozeiu et al. 2016, 251). The element of *inter* is understood to consider "the idea of moving between two entities or residing in a hybrid space in-between or being able to adapt fluently to situations with coexisting cultural influences from various directions" (ibid. 253). This redefinition signals a move away from the traditional notion of (national) linguacultures bridged by translation and towards an acknowledgement of plurilingual contexts with their varied and changing degrees of hybridity. "In short, intercultural competence means being able to perceive and handle difference" (Katan 2009, 284). In achieving such competence, training of skills such as openness, politeness, curiosity, empathy, and adaptability are listed. However, the identification and assessment of how these are reflected in the students' linguistic choices and strategies should be better investigated (Tomozeiu et al. 2016, 253–254).

5. Mediation in the CEFR framework

5.1 Data: Policy documents

We will next focus on the conceptualizations of mediation in core CEFR documents and identify elements that are important with respect to understanding translatoriality and its role in the framework. Currently, the most important European language teaching framework policy document is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume* (later CEFR 2020), According to this, the focus of mediation "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" (CEFR 2020, 90). The framework divides the education of four communicative language strategies into reception, production, interaction, and mediation (ibid. 35). Mediation, then, according to North and Piccardo (2016, 13), can be understood as a developmental notion having at least four types: linguistic, cultural, social, and pedagogic.

The *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Guide 2016) was written to help teachers to implement the new aims in their teaching. As examples of what is meant by mediation the authors list activities such as: "choosing forms of language according to the person you are talking to; choosing forms of language adapted to the context; anticipating possible problems of understanding and taking them into account [and] solving problems of understanding" (ibid. 50). In another related document, the authors continue that "[to] mediate is, *inter alia*, to reformulate, to transcode, to alter linguistically and/or semiotically by rephrasing in the same language, by alternating languages, by switching from oral to written expression or vice versa, by changing genres, by combining text and other modes of representation, or by relying on the resources – both human and technical – present in the immediate environment" (Coste and Cavalli 2015, 62–63).

The guide (2016, 10) defines plurilingual and intercultural competence and mediation as the ability to use and to enrich a *plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources* to meet communication needs or to interact with others. In other words, the guide both emphasizes the plurality of language resources an individual may can have acquired through formal and informal channels and the cultural competence of operating in the interface of the plural cultures that a plurilingual context entails. Intercultural competence is defined as "the ability to *experience otherness* and *cultural diversity*, to analyse that experience and to derive benefit from it" (ibid.). This definition underlines the experiential and affective layers of interculturality, and the necessity for self-reflection and growth. Intercultural competence allows one to build bridges between members of different social groups and their cultures, and also to reflect on the assumptions of one's own cultural group (ibid.).

The most detailed descriptions of what the framework entails are given in a document containing the descriptor scales that are designed to support assessment (CEFR 2018). The concepts are further developed in the 2020 companion volume (CEFR 2020). Their level of detail allows us to take a closer look at the expected pedagogical practices. In CEFR 2020, mediation is divided into two main groups: **mediation activities** and **mediation strategies**. Mediation strategies cover two main issues: (1) strategies to explain a new concept and (2) strategies to simplify a text. Mediation activities involve (1) **text mediating** (including also spoken forms of text), (2) **concept mediating** (including cognitive mediation), and (3) **communication mediating** (see Figure 1).

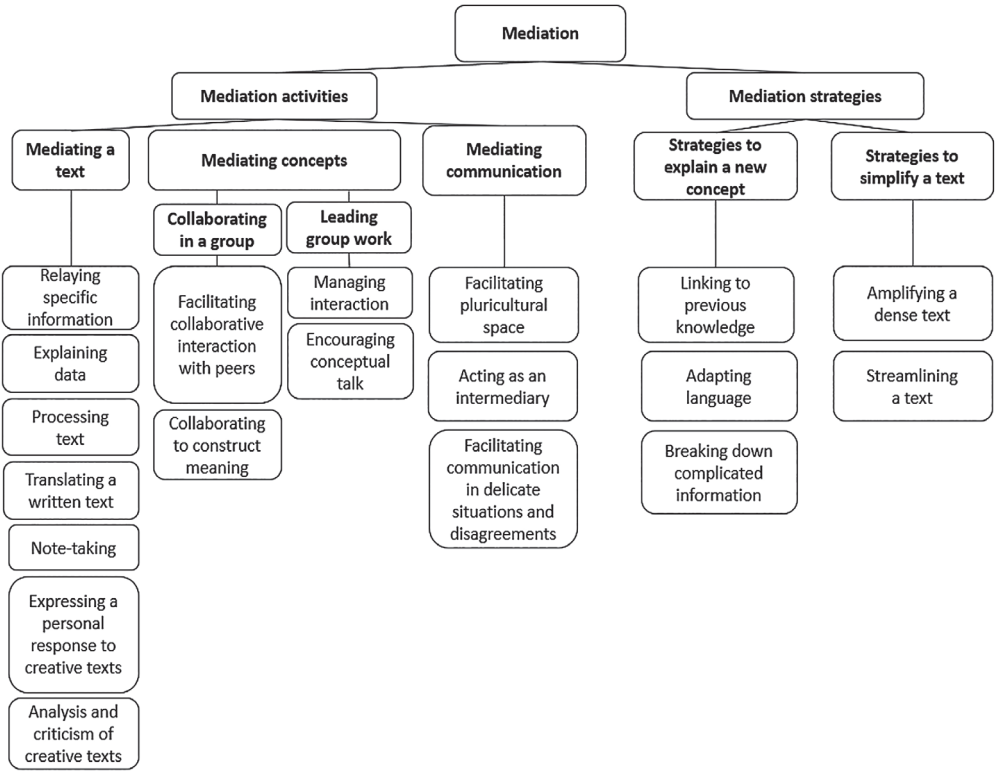

Figure 1. Mediation. Figure sketched according to a diagram originally published in CEFR (2020, 90).

Different mediation skills are then scaled into six categories from proficiency level A1 to level C2. At the highest level (C2) overall mediation proficiency is described as follows:

> 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). (CEFR 2020, 91)

C2 is thus a very advanced level of language use. In summary, the most important overall mediation skills in the CEFR are less about linguistic competence – such as the ability to summarize a meaning of a text and to report its context – and more on

personal and people skills such as the ability to collaborate, interest in other people, empathy, ability to formulate suggestions, to respond, to propose, to ask for an opinion (i.e., negotiation skills).

5.2 Mediation activities: Mediating a text

In the CEFR 2020, *translating* as a term only features in the category of mediating the text. In this category, the proficiency scales consist of seven groups of skills that are: (1) **relaying specific information**, (2) **explaining data,** (3) **processing text**, (4) **translating a written text**, (5) **note-taking**, (6) **expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature),** and (7) **analysis and criticism of creative texts** (including literature) (CEFR 2020, 90). In relaying, explaining, processing, and translating information the process is defined as interlingual (from Language A to Language B),[2] and is therefore clearly translatorial in nature across the scales. Keeping in mind CEFR's aim of broadening the concept of translation, this seems a missed opportunity to enlarge the overlap of translation and mediation. The separate category of translating a written text rather functions as a testament to a narrow translation concept.

The assessment descriptors reflect how the skill of mediating develops from conveying or explaining simple information in everyday communication to processing formal and complex source texts, and how the learner is expected to distil and summarize relevant information in written or oral form. In the framework, translating a written text is first understood as oral translation, which consists of "providing a rough, approximate translation; capturing the essential information; capturing nuances (higher levels)" (CEFR 2020, 102). At the lowest level (A1) it is expected that the learner "can, with the help of a dictionary, translate simple words/signs and phrases (from Language A into Language B), but may not always select the appropriate meaning". The skill is seen to develop from comprehensibility (up to B1+) to accuracy (B2). At level C1, interference is still to be expected. At the highest level C2, a student can "translate (into Language B) technical material outside their field of specialization (written in Language A), provided subject matter accuracy is checked by a specialist in the field concerned." The traditional source-text orientation comes to the fore here in the progression statement: "at the higher levels, the source texts become increasingly complex, and the translation is more and more accurate and reflective of the original."

2 In the CEFR context, Language A and Language B do not indicate any order of language acquisition or the direction of translation: "The scale deliberately does not address the issue of translating into and from the first language --- This is partly because of the fact that, for increasing numbers of plurilingual persons, "first language" and "best language" are not always synonymous" (CEFR 2020, 102).

Students are assessed in reproducing the substantive message of the source text in a written form, but it is not required that it is produced as elegantly and competently in style and tone as professional translators would be expected to produce their translations (CEFR 2020, 102). The assessment of the written translation considers the following aspects: "comprehensibility of the translation; the extent to which the original formulations and structure (over-)influence the translation, as opposed to the text following relevant conventions in the target language; capturing nuances in the original" (CEFR 2020, 102).

From a translation studies perspective, the descriptors for translating seem to reflect a rather old idea of translation excellence, focusing on accuracy and faithful re-rendering of nuance, expecting increased proficiency to be measured by lesser reliance on translation tools such as dictionaries. What we do not see here are communicative skills, functional, skopos-oriented or user-centred modification skills or the ability to negotiate otherness in texts – all central elements of translation competence in modern professional practice. The scales seem to reflect a source-oriented translation concept that is ill-fitting for learning the skills of mediation.

The companion document underlines that translation assessment descriptors do not describe "the competences of professional interpreters and translators" but target a language competence that is needed in informal language use in everyday situations (CEFR 2020, 92–93). Still, the textual nuance expected at the highest levels of translating is quite high. At the same time, all text mediation skills can be considered such that are included in translator and interpreter training. For example, processing a text is a skill that is fundamental to translation: "Processing text involves understanding the information and/or arguments included in the source text and then transferring these to another text, usually in a more condensed form, in a way that is appropriate to the context" (CEFR 2020, 98).

5.3 Mediating activities: Mediating concepts

Mediating concepts refers to conveying and discussing ideas. Whereas translating a text is presented in the framework as a rather non-communicative, source-text oriented activity, mediating concepts is explicitly seen as an interpersonal skill, developed in collaboration with others in group work. It is broken down to the following categories: (1) **facilitating collaborative interaction with peers**, (2) **collaborating to construct meaning**, (3) **managing interaction**, and (4) **encouraging conceptual talk**. The latter skill develops from being able to use "simple isolated words/signs and non-verbal signals to show interest in an idea" (A1) to effectively leading "the development of ideas in a discussion of complex abstract topics, giving direction by targeting questions and

encouraging others to elaborate on their reasoning" (C2) (ibid. 113), acknowledging that although mediating concepts is largely an interpersonal skill, in an L2-setting language skills are a prerequisite for displaying it. At the highest described level (C1-C2) of facilitating collaborative interaction the learner is expected to show sensitivity to different opinions and disagreements, to tactfully steer interaction, facilitate agreement and challenge others' ideas and find ways forward to a consensus (ibid. 117). All these descriptors emphasize taking a constructive and consensus-building role in social situations. This skill combines sensitivity, empathy, and assertiveness with verbalization strategies in ways that connect directly to mediation as a negotiation skill.

The learner is expected to understand that languages are tools for thinking about a subject and tools for expressing ideas to other people (ibid. 108). Mediation strategies are techniques the learners can practice to explain a new concept to others. The companion volume of CEFR lists the following three techniques: linking to previous knowledge, adapting language, and breaking down complicated information (ibid. 118). These techniques indicate a high degree of intralingual translatoriality and target-orientedness. At C2 level the learner can "adapt the language of a very wide range of texts in order to present the main content in a register and degree of sophistication and detail *appropriate to the audience concerned*" and "*facilitate understanding* of a complex issue by explaining the relationship of parts to the whole and encourage different ways of approaching it" (ibid. 119 italics added).

Whereas the technique "mediating a text" was described with no reference to target audience or user-centeredness, elements central to professional translation practice, "mediating concepts" is all about taking the others into account, adapting one's behaviour and language use so that a desired outcome can be supported. This technique also involves rephrasing and reframing so that the discussion can move forward. In that sense it is quite translatorial although the descriptors contain no direct reference to translation or movement between languages. In a language learning context, this intralingual adaptation takes place – one assumes, although this is not specified – in a language foreign to all participants, which would entail that expressing sensitivity and empathy as well as detecting potential challenges and disagreements is rendered more difficult as the learners not only need to monitor their own language skills but also constantly assess those of the others to adapt their expressions to an appropriate level. In the FL and L2 settings, the technique "mediating concepts" invites a more explicit translatorial component: available language resources are plurilingual (there is by definition at least one additional L1 language), creating opportunities to practice plurilingual co-construction of meaning. As Latomaa and Suni (2011, 132) have argued, in order to support the developing plurilingual repertoires that the students have, instruction and assessment practices which encourage the students to rely on

their multilingual resources need to be implemented. This kind of negotiation of multilingual performance requires a more flexible translation concept than the CEFR currently develops. In its extreme forms, this plurilingual approach also extends beyond the concept of translatoriality we have developed in this paper. In those cases, it may then be advisable to resort to the ideas embedded within the concept of translanguaging (see González-Davies 2020).

5.4 Mediating activities: Mediating communication

The technique "mediating communication" refers to facilitating pluricultural space, acting as an intermediary in informal situations and facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements. The learners are assessed in their abilities of "creating a neutral, trusted, shared "space" in order to enhance communication between others" (CEFR 2020, 114). That is, they are explicitly expected to learn to act as an intermediary in a triadic situation. The aim is to learn how to communicate the sense of what has been said by someone to someone else. The skill is not only pluricultural but also translatorial in the interlingual sense: At B1 level the learner can "communicate (in Language B) the main sense of what is said (in Language A) on subjects of personal interest, while following important politeness conventions, provided the interlocutors articulate clearly and they can ask for clarification and pause to plan how to express things." Whereas at the highest level (C2) the learner "can communicate in a clear, fluent, well-structured way (in Language B) the sense of what is said (in Language A) on a wide range of general and specialized topics, maintaining appropriate style and register, conveying finer shades of meaning and elaborating on sociocultural implications" (CEFR 202, 116).

We can see that in the assessment the narrow translation concept, focusing on fluent repetition, again takes precedence over the overall aims of mediation, creating a tension between the overarching pedagogical aims of mediation and measurable linguistic accuracy of the student's translatorial performance. The descriptors are perhaps designed to reflect the role expectations of professional interpreters more than those of intercultural mediators (see above). At the same time, mediation is also foregrounded, and this part of the CEFR framework corresponds very closely to the skills that are essential for professional interpreters. The learner is expected to clarify problems between third parties, to resolve their misunderstandings as well as help them understand each other's positions (CEFR 2020, 116). This understanding of mediating communication is far removed from an old conduit model of interpreted interaction (in which the interpreter is an invisible and impartial channel). The tension between being a (pluri)cultural mediator and intermediary third party between partners who

do not share a language is a permanent challenge in professional interpreting, and it is no wonder it also becomes visible in the CEFR. Even so, the nuances of interpreters' interactional competence such as the professional use of contextualization cues, i.e., prosodic features like intonation, body positioning signalling stance, head and eye movements, gestures, and silences that can all potentially cause miscommunication (Jakobson 2009, 55–56), make it clear that the CEFR is not aiming at reaching a professional level of interpretation.

Everyday translatoriality is often flexible and resourceful, and unconstrained by professional norms (Koskela et al. 2017). The fact that the communicative and collaborative CEFR mediation aims at accuracy-oriented, constrained descriptors for written and oral translation has resulted in a mixed message being given. Assessment of interpersonal mediation is considered difficult (Corbett 2021, 10), and the pressure towards "objectivity, conformity, consistency and certainty" (Scarino 2013) may steer assessment toward the focus on linguistic accuracy and error analysis, away from assessing the aims of mediation and its success. This would be unfortunate, although in a language learning classroom context mediation is to great extent realized with those linguistic resources that are available to the language learners. It is necessary to understand that language is used on the one hand only as a tool or medium of an action to achieve something, but on the other hand mediation is also achieved through the skilful use of languages, i.e., through language, in and through a translation process in which concepts are reformulated using another language, for example to resolve a conflict or misunderstanding, or to gain someone's access to new information. However, as already stressed, it would be more advantageous for the assessment of the learning outcome, if also the strategies and activities – like explaining, diplomatic interventions, expressions of interest etc. and the fluent use of multimodal or technological communicative resources used in mediation and the results of this mediative action – would be evaluated, although their measurement is not easy.[3]

6. Conclusions

In the above sections we have outlined how written and oral modes of translation are described in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, and identified other kinds of translatorial practices that are implied within the category of mediation. The explicit aim of the new framework documents of 2020 was to move away from a narrow translation concept. Indeed, a lot of mediation activities are brought into focus, but as their translatorial aspects, especially prominent in FL

3 For sociocultural or socio-constructivist theories of language and language learning behind the CEFR, see for example Corbett (2021, 9–13).

contexts, remain largely unidentified as such, the resulting translation concept appears both still narrow and also ill-suited to the overall mediation context. It takes some elements from professional translation and interpreting practice – creating a high bar for language learners – but excludes many communicative, function-oriented and user-centered aspects that have been developed in professional translation practice and could support learners in learning to mediate.

Assessment is a touchstone in the CEFR. As Vallejo and Dooly (2020, 10) point out, the varied translanguaging activities are not aligned with traditional assessment practices. The current focus on mediation requires accepting that assessments cannot only concern linguistic skills but also needs to cover social, interpersonal and intercultural skills in an increasingly intermodal and technologized communication environment. Scarino (2013) calls for increased mediation assessment literacy, and González-Davies (2020, 434) proposes that language learners and teachers need translation literacy. We suggest that this can be supported through a wider engagement with and an explicitation of flexible translatoriality across descriptors. This, together with a move away from an accuracy-based translation concept might bring in assessments tools and methods already in use in translator and interpreter training that could be modified for language learners at different stages.

One element to rethink is the idea of A and B languages, very prominent in the translation descriptors, signalling a duality that does not always reflect classroom reality. While the existence of languages C, D and so on are acknowledged and even underlined in the companion documents, the descriptors do not offer indications of how to deal with this plurality in practice. For example, the teachers may not share all language resources with their students, and that adds to the difficulty of assessment if the assessment descriptors build on accuracy of rendering, as they currently do. Agile use of pooled resources should be promoted and valued, and translatorial competences should be recognized and developed from early on. Moreover, in today's world translatoriality is often technology-mediated, therefore technology needs to be seen as one language resource among others, and mediation technology literacy to be acknowledged as another competence to be developed. Whatever we decide to call these plurilingual mediational practices, more fieldwork is needed to understand and categorize classroom activities. In this gathering and analysis of empirical data, translation scholars will have a role to play in identifying translatorial activities where existing knowledge of translating and interpreting can be brought to enrich our understanding and to support the teachers and assessors.

To a large extent, a mediation competence is an interpersonal competence, bringing emotional intelligence and empathy and their development and assessment into

sharp relief (CEFR 2020, 90). These are elements Tomozeiu et al. (2016) and Koskinen (2015) also identify as relevant for training translators in a superdiverse world. Indeed, the CEFR's current understanding of intercultural competence and mediation demonstrates competences that are also considered central for the translator and interpreter professions, and thus indicates a shared ground in the theoretical foundation of language education and translator and interpreter education. One such shared element is ethics. It is not very transparent in the CEFR that intermediaries can use their position and power for good or bad purposes. Mediation is largely seen as a positive force, and the same applies to translation. However, in addition to positive functions of a mediating task, intermediaries can also misuse their skills (Valdeón 2021). Therefore, any teaching framework would do well to implement checks and balances to ensure ethical behaviour.

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