The CEFR Companion volume with New Descriptors – defining and activating 'soft' skills for professional success

Tim Goodier, Eurocentres

EUROCENTRES
Language Learning Worldwide

About Eaquals

Mission:
'To foster excellence in language education across the world by providing guidance and support to teaching institutions and individuals'

Language learning for Global Citizenship

'Through our strong educational principles and values, Eaquals has become the leading professional association for language education throughout the world.'

About Eurocentres

Mission:

'To prepare individuals to study, work and live successfully in a foreign language and culture.'

Vision:

**'We are THE worldwide benchmark for learning& teaching a / in a foreign language.'**
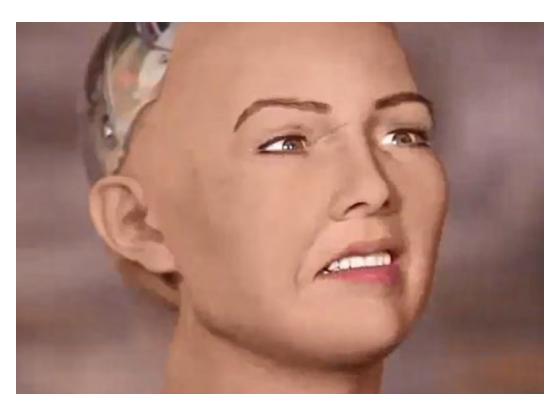
Agenda

I.   **Context for discussion**

II. **The CEFR and its 21st century impact**

III. **Why a new Companion Volume?**

IV. **Activating 'soft' communication skills for professional success**

I. Context for discussion

Disruption
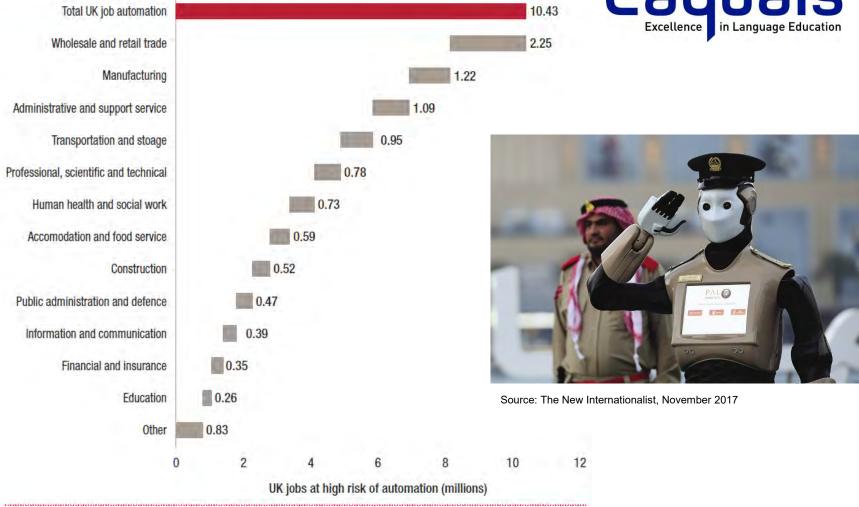
Source: CNBC, accessed November 2017

Computer Vision - Platform
(190 Companies)

- cortica
- clarifai
- ImageVision
- KAIROS
- AlchemyAPI
- FACE++

Computer Vision - App
(182 Companies)

- Slyce
- LEAP
- allyke
- DEFINIENS Understanding Images
- CHUTE
- BLUE RIVER
- CURALATE

Smart Robots
(145 Companies)

- anki
- jibo
- tingbot
- savioke
- ALDEBARAN
- neato robotics

Gesture Control
(59 Companies)

- eyeSight
- gestigon
- 3DiVi
- omek
- GestureTek

Speech Recognition
(155 Companies)

- voci
- promptu
- MALUUBA
- speech

Machine Learning - Applications
(526 Companies)

- AYASDI
- criteo
- DB NETWORKS
- drive.ai
- EVERSTRING
- Energy
- 6sense
- argo
- ALGORITHMIA
- Custome

Artificial Intelligence

Venture Scanner

Contact info@venturescanner.com
to access the full market report and

Machine Learning - Platform
(217 Companies)

- bigml
- ALPACA
- GraphLab
- iCarbonX
- nervana

Natural Language Processing
(269 Companies)

- CLEARFOREST
- inbenta
- ARRIA
- Digital Reasoning
- tiveScience
- ai AUTOMATED

Virtual Assistants
(160 Companies)

- next IT
- ejenta
- sherpa
- X.
- Z
- ViV

Recom

- ex
- nar
- Utr
- Tip

Computing
anies)

- ense
- PPEAR
- origo

Speech to Speech Trans.
(21 Companies)

- AppTek
- Speech
- VoiceBase

Data from April 2017

Figure 4.3 – Potential jobs at high risk of automation by UK industry sector

Sector	UK jobs at high risk of automation (millions)
Total UK job automation	10.43
Wholesale and retail trade	2.25
Manufacturing	1.22
Administrative and support service	1.09
Transportation and stoage	0.95
Professional, scientific and technical	0.78
Human health and social work	0.73
Accomodation and food service	0.59
Construction	0.52
Public administration and defence	0.47
Information and communication	0.39
Financial and insurance	0.35
Education	0.26
Other	0.83

UK jobs at high risk of automation (millions)

Source: The New Internationalist, November 2017

Sources: ONS; PIAAC data; PwC analysis

Taken from Price Waterhouse Cooper report www.pwc.co.uk/economics – Will Robots Steal Our Jobs? , 2017

Warm up

With a partner / colleague, rate to what extent you expect 'disruption' to affect the English language learning needs of clients in your context(s)

0 (none)   1   2   3   4   5 (high)

An unlikely scenario?
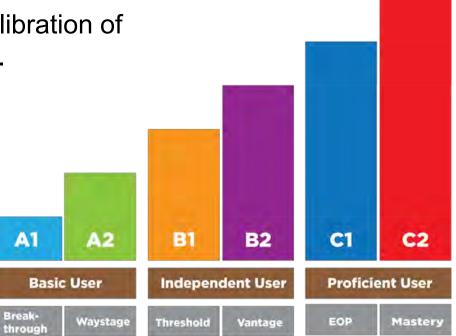
II. The CEFR and its 21st century impact

What is the CEFR?

- A descriptive scheme and common scale of linguistic and communicative competences.

- Scales based on statistical calibration of individual 'can do' descriptors.

- Applicable across different languages.

- Policy instrument widely used for visa and university language requirements.

A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Basic User		Independent User		Proficient User	
Break-through	Waystage	Threshold	Vantage	EOP	Mastery
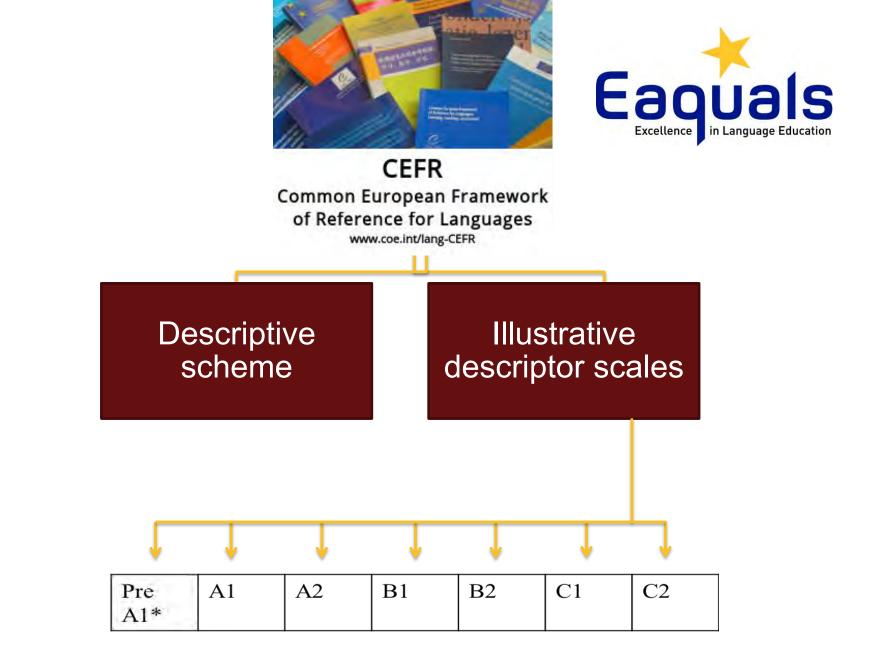
A global benchmark
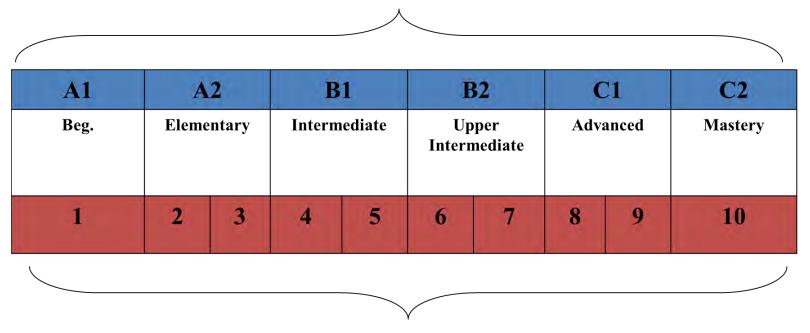
- The Common European Framework of Reference has been recognised worldwide as a benchmark for describing and profiling language and communicative ability
- Its is available in more than 40 languages, including sign language

CEFR
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

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| Descriptive scheme | Illustrative descriptor scales |

| Pre A1* | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |

Pedagogic example (Eurocentres)

CEFR levels used for course organisation

A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Beg.	Elementary	Intermediate	Upper Intermediate	Advanced	Mastery

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
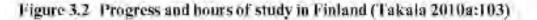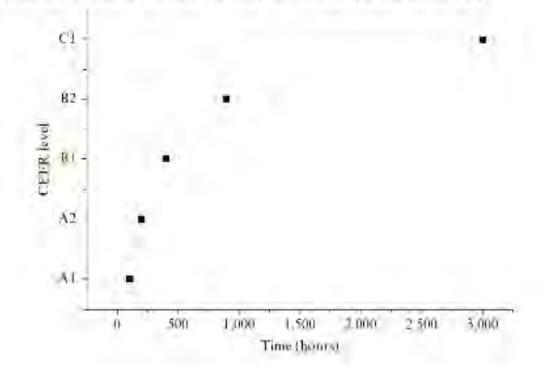
Numbered levels used for accurately assessing proficiency

Progress

The CEFR Common Reference Levels

Figure 3.2 Progress and hours of study in Finland (Takala 2010a:103)

Takala (2010b) in North (2017) The CEFR in Practice

Musicianship: a performance analogy

From the CEFR

- I can play 'Greensleeves'

- I can play 'Chopsticks'

- I can play Rachmaninov's Piano concerto no.2

- I can name that tune in 4

- I can quickly transcribe music with high precision

- **Can agree and disagree with others** (informal discussion A2)

- **Can ask people for things and give people things** (goal-oriented cooperation A1)

- **Can give clear, smoothly flowing, elaborate and often memorable descriptions** (Sustained monologue C2)

- **Can catch the main point in short, clear simple messages and announcements** (Listening to announcements & instructions A2)

- **Can take detailed notes during a lecture on topics in my field of interest, recording the information so accurately and so close to the original that the notes could also be useful to other people** (Note-taking in lectures, seminars etc. C1)

The CEFR Scales in language pedagogy
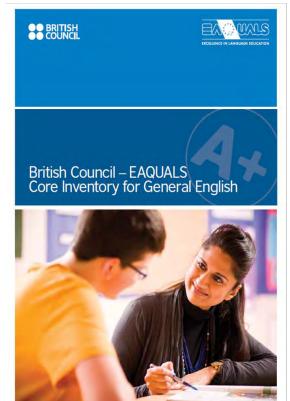
'Unzipped'* / course-adapted *can do*s	• Pedagogic aims supported by classroom tasks and language specifications	**Teaching and learning aims**
Communicative language activities	• Observable outcomes • Appraisal of task achievement	**Scales in CEFR chapter 4**
Communicative language competences	• Observable behaviours • Detailed assessment criteria	**Scales in CEFR chapter 5**
Global scale descriptors	• Self-evaluation • Global assessment criteria	**Scales in CEFR chapter 3**

Specifications for languages

Core inventories for English and French developed through Eurocentres/Eaquals collaboration

With British Council
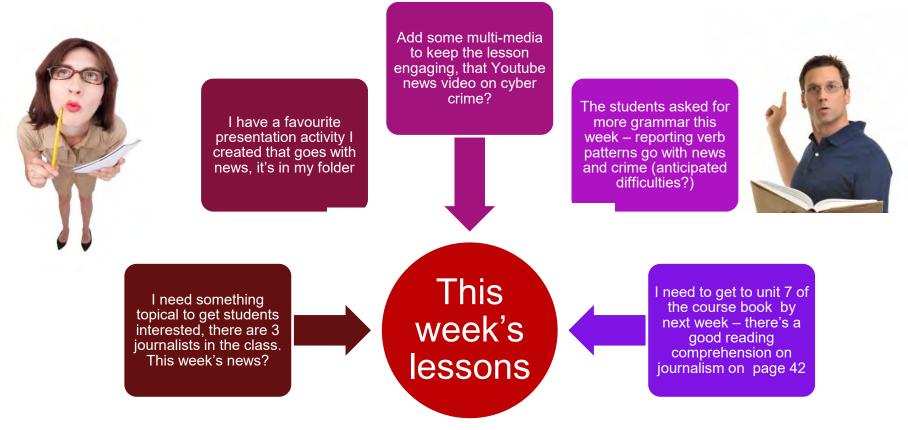
With CIEP

Impact on teaching and learning

Add some multi-media to keep the lesson engaging, that Youtube news video on cyber crime?

I have a favourite presentation activity I created that goes with news, it's in my folder

The students asked for more grammar this week – reporting verb patterns go with news and crime (anticipated difficulties?)

I need something topical to get students interested, there are 3 journalists in the class. This week's news?

This week's lessons

I need to get to unit 7 of the course book by next week – there's a good reading comprehension on journalism on page 42

….and the communicative aim is?

Activity (10 minutes):

Look at our fictional teacher's thoughts on handout 1

Help her/him to formulate some communicative lesson aims, selecting and adapting from the given B2 syllabus of communicative tasks based on *can do* statements

- **What effect might looking at the communicative can do statements have on the lesson focus?**

- **What could help the teacher work in the opposite direction ftom communicative aims to content?**

- **What else might a teacher do with these communicative aims apart from writing them on the board?**

Establish a pedagogic lingua franca

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Coherence between the institution's stated **educational philosophy and pedagogic approach** (as set out in the relevant documents) and classroom practice is apparent.

Sampling of live online lessons and / or E-learning shows that lesson content and exploitation of the online medium is consistent with the stated aims and description of the course.

5.1 The course books or other core course materials, online learning platforms and resources, and reference materials reflect course objectives and the methodology used

Online content is accessible for teachers to preview with sufficient clarity so that they can:
- find things quickly and easily according to focus and level of challenge
- recognize the function played by each type of material
- allocate or recommend relevant material to learners accordingly.

And make it ubiquitous

LISTENING RESOURCES FINDER: GLA (pm) A2+ EUROCENTRES

Level Aims (ticks to be referenced only as a guide)

Course Books and Recording Script Numbers: Shaded books are core documents to be stocked by all schools

							Framework Level 2	Language to Go Pre-Intermediate	Just Right Pre-Intermediate	Ideas and Issues Pre-Intermediate	Clockwise Pre-Intermediate	Just Listening and Speaking Pre-Intermediate	Language Leader Pre-Intermediate	Straightforward Intermediate
Accommodation / homes	√					√		5.9	28.4	50		3	36	1.26
Animals & nature			√			√					p.24.2, p.32.2			1.32-33
Asking for / giving information	√	√			√								20	
Biography / life experiences / ambitions	√					√				31	p.20.2	24.1-2		1.6, 2.34 2.40-41
Countries / Nationalities / Culture	√					√	1.1-3	15.4	1.3		20.2-4	1.-3	1.31, 1.36
Crime / the law / danger	√					√		31.5, 38.4	50	p.68.2			1.47, 2.29

Communicative Tasks | Language Resources

Receptive Skills	0/9
Listening text types	0/9
Reading Text Types	1/8
Spoken Interaction	1/7

27. Take an active part in a discussion, using a range of language to do so. (0)
28. Manage interaction (interrupt, change topic, invite another speaker to come in or to continue). (0)
29. Find out and pass on detailed information, ask follow up questions and get clarification. (1)
30. Evaluate advantages and disadvantages and participate in reaching a decision. (0)
31. Express agreement, disagreement and reactions including interest, sympathy, surprise, etc. (0)
32. Express attitudes, personal feelings and emotions. (0)
33. Make and respond to assumptions, deductions and hypotheses. (0)

Spoken Production and Writing	0/10

Drag Work To A Lesson
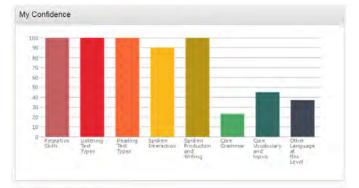
Lesson	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.15-10.55					

My Confidence

(bar chart: Receptive Skills, Listening Text Types, Reading Text Types, Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production and Writing, Core Grammar, Core Vocabulary and topics, Other Language at this Level)

Self-assessment and tutorials

View my aims >

At level B1, I feel confident in the following aims:

- **Receptive Skills:**
  - Focus on information that is interesting or important to you
  - Distinguish the main point from specific details
  - Understand the important details
  - Understand a line of argument and main conclusions

23

How can learners be consulted at each step?

1. **Learning aims**

6. **Course design**

2. **Learning activities**

The Learners' World

5. **Needs analysis**

3. **Assessment**

4. **Remedial practice**

II. Why a new Companion Volume?

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)

A transparent, coherent and comprehensive reference instrument

The result of over twenty years of research, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) is exactly what its title says it is: a framework of reference. It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It is used in Europe but also in other continents.

The CEFR is available in 40 languages

CEFR
**Common European Framework
of Reference for Languages**
www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

🔥 New

The *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (Provisional Edition) is now available. The French version will be published in late autumn.

It is intended as a complement to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR). It represents another important step in a process that has been pursued by the Council of Europe since 1971 and owes much to the contributions of members of the language teaching profession across Europe and beyond.

The "Companion Volume" is the Council of Europe's response to requests that have been made by the groups involved in the field of language education to complement the original illustrative scales with more descriptors. In addition to the extended illustrative descriptors, it contains an introduction to the aims and main principles of the CEFR.

The CEFR online :

- **Full 2001 English text**
  - Prefatory Note
  - Notes for the User
  - Synopsis
- **CEFR 2017 Companion Volume**
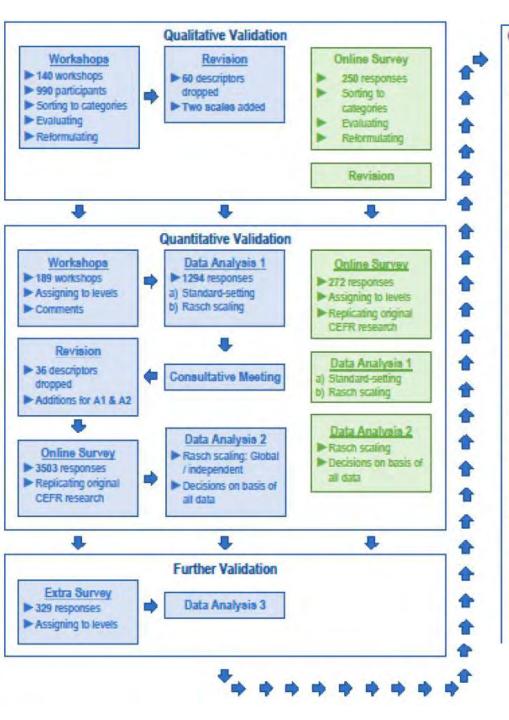
✉ Contact us

Enrichment and extension of the CEFR

Activities		2001 descriptive scheme	2001 illustrative scales (**levels and descriptors**)	Extended / enriched in new CEFR Companion Volume	Added in new CEFR Companion Volume
Reception	Spoken	√	√	√	
	Written	√	√	√	
	Strategies	√	√	√	
Production	Spoken	√	√	√	
	Written	√	√	√	
	Strategies	√	√	√	
Interaction	Spoken	√	√	√	
	Written	√	√	√	
	Strategies	√	√	√	
	Online				√
Mediation	Spoken	√			√
	Written	√			√
	Strategies	√			√
Other Scales	Literature & Art				√
	Plurilingual / Pluricultural				√

Qualitative Validation

Workshops
- 140 workshops
- 990 participants
- Sorting to categories
- Evaluating
- Reformulating

Revision
- 60 descriptors dropped
- Two scales added

Online Survey
- 250 responses
- Sorting to categories
- Evaluating
- Reformulating

Revision

Quantitative Validation

Workshops
- 189 workshops
- Assigning to levels
- Comments

Data Analysis 1
- 1294 responses
- a) Standard-setting
- b) Rasch scaling

Online Survey
- 272 responses
- Assigning to levels
- Replicating original CEFR research

Revision
- 36 descriptors dropped
- Additions for A1 & A2

Consultative Meeting

Data Analysis 1
- a) Standard-setting
- b) Rasch scaling

Online Survey
- 3503 responses
- Replicating original CEFR research

Data Analysis 2
- Rasch scaling: Global / independent
- Decisions on basis of all data

Data Analysis 2
- Rasch scaling
- Decisions on basis of all data

Further Validation

Extra Survey
- 329 responses
- Assigning to levels

Data Analysis 3

Consultation & Piloting

Consultative Meeting

Pre-consultation Expert Survey
- 58 responses

Revision
- 60 descriptors dropped
- No additions

Formal Consultation
- 20 Member States
- 28 Institutions
- 500+ Individuals

Piloting
- 61 Up to date
- Plurilingual /pluricultural
- Mediation
- Online interaction

Consultative Meeting

Revision
- Categories re-organised
- 53 descriptors dropped
- 18 descriptors added
- 88 descriptors revised

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Contents of the Companion Volume with New Descriptors

Text
- Introduction
- Key aspects of the CEFR for teaching and learning

Scales
- All the CEFR illustrative scales in one place
- Extended and new scales

Appendices
- Tools for assessment
- Methodology reference
- Examples of tasks in different domains

Mediation – the 'x' factor for employability

"Taking the dynamic nature of meaning making to another level."
(North & Piccardo, 2017)

- facilitating access to information and ideas

- promoting better understanding between different viewpoints

- reducing tensions, fostering an environment conducive to the above

How mediation 'fits'
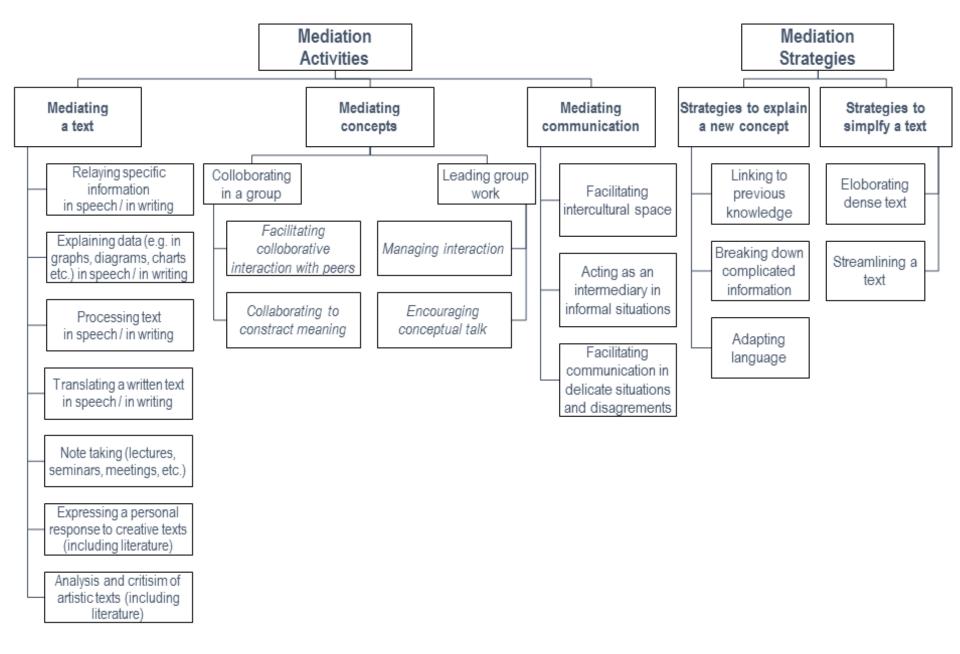
Table 1 – Macro-functional basis of CEFR categories for communicative language activities

	RECEPTION	PRODUCTION	INTERACTION	MEDIATION
Creative, Interpersonal Language Use	e.g. Reading as a leisure activity	e.g. Sustained monologue: Describing experience	e.g. Conversation	Mediating communication
Transactional Language Use	e.g. Reading for information and argument	e.g. Sustained monologue: Giving information	e.g. Obtaining goods and services Information exchange	Mediating a text
Evaluative, Problem-solving Language Use	*(Merged with reading for information and argument)*	e.g. Sustained monologue: Presenting a case	e.g. Discussion	Mediating concepts

MEDIATING A TEXT

RELAYING SPECIFIC INFORMATION IN SPEECH		TEXT (& DISCOURSE ENVIRONMENT)			
LEVEL	DESCRIPTORS	PERSONAL	PUBLIC	OCCUPATIONAL	EDUCATIONAL
C2	*No descriptor available: see C1*				
C1	Can explain (in Language B) the relevance of specific information given in a particular section of a long, complex text (written in Language A).	in an article, website, book or talk face-to-face / online concerning current affairs or an area of personal interest or concern	from presentations at public meetings, from public documents explaining policy changes, political speeches		an article, book, reference book or lecture/presentation
B2	Can relay (in Language B) which presentations given in (Language A) at a conference, which articles in a book (written in Language A) are particularly relevant for a specific purpose.	webtalk / self help group explanations (e.g. how to repair your printer); articles related to a particular theme or current issue of interest	presentations at public meetings, from public documents explaining policy changes a press conference, on various web talk sites, in relation to a particular issue	?	an academic conference, various webtalk sites, from academic books and journals – in relation to a particular project
	Can relay (in Language B) the main point(s) contained in formal correspondence and/or reports on general subjects and on subjects related to his/her fields of interest (written in Language A).	a notice, announcement, letter or email outlining policies, regulations or procedures related to housing, insurance, rent/mortgages, employment or health care	a notice or announcement made by a public authority or facility like a library, swimming pool, etc. outlining regulations or procedures		a letter, email or notice outlining university policies, procedures or regulations
B1	Can relay (in Language B) the content of public announcements and messages spoken in clear, standard (Language A) at normal speed.	on the radio or TV	in a station, airport, sports stadium, at political rallies/events, alerts, warnings or instructions which may be given at an accident site or construction zone		during a university event/lecture, which may take place in a large auditorium
	Can relay (in Language B) the contents of detailed instructions or directions, provided these are clearly articulated (in Language A).	on the radio or TV, from a passer-by such as travel/route information, instructions from a friend over the phone on how to get to a party	instructions at airports, stations and on planes, buses and trains or on how to use simple equipment such as a hotel safe; directions on how to get from X to Y, a travel itinerary		academic regulations, policies/procedures, course/assignment requirements given by a professor/teacher; instructions given on how to use simple research tools to

Appendix 6 – Examples of use in different domains for descriptors of online interaction and mediation activities ▶ Page 175

```
                    Mediation                                    Mediation
                    Activities                                   Strategies

   Mediating              Mediating            Mediating       Strategies to explain      Strategies to
   a text                 concepts             communication    a new concept            simplfy a text

  Relaying specific    Colloborating    Leading group      Facilitating          Linking to       Eloborating
  information          in a group       work               intercultural space   previous         dense text
  in speech / in writing                                                         knowledge

  Explaining data (e.g. in   Facilitating        Managing interaction    Acting as an        Breaking down    Streamlining a
  graphs, diagrams, charts   colloborative                               intermediary in     complicated      text
  etc.) in speech / in writing   interaction with peers                  informal situations  information

  Processing text      Collaborating to     Encouraging         Facilitating          Adapting
  in speech / in writing   constract meaning   conceptual talk    communication in      language
                                                                  delicate situations
                                                                  and disagrements
  Translating a written text
  in speech / in writing

  Note taking (lectures,
  seminars, meetings, etc.)

  Expressing a personal
  response to creative texts
  (including literature)

  Analysis and critisim of
  artistic texts (including
  literature)
```

II. Activating 'soft' communication skills for professional success

Top 10 skills

in 2020

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgment and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

in 2015

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity

Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum
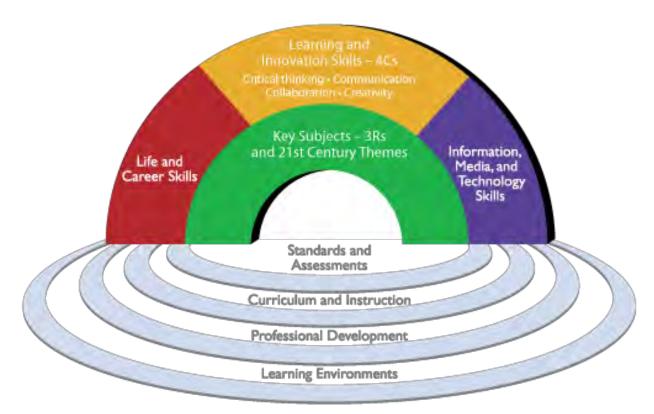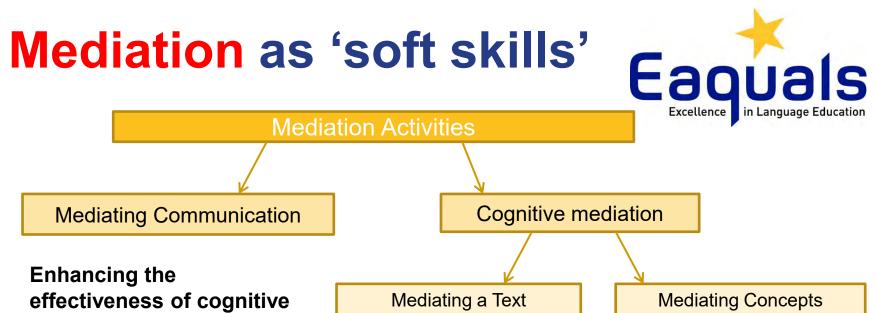
The '21ˢᵗ Century Skills' movement

P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning

21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems

Learning and Innovation Skills – 4Cs
Critical thinking · Communication
Collaboration · Creativity

Life and Career Skills

Key Subjects – 3Rs and 21st Century Themes

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Standards and Assessments

Curriculum and Instruction

Professional Development

Learning Environments

© 2007 Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)

www.P21.org/Framework

Mediation as 'soft skills'

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```
                    Mediation Activities
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
   Mediating Communication            Cognitive mediation
                                  ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                          Mediating a Text      Mediating Concepts
```

Enhancing the effectiveness of cognitive mediation by:

- creating a positive atmosphere
- showing cultural awareness
- facilitating collaborative interaction

Relaying / summarising / synthesising information from spoken or written sources (including translation).

Sources include:

- listening material
- reading material
- class discussions / conversations
- data, graphs, statistics
- visuals, diagrams, pictures

Collaborating with others in order to come to a decision or solve a problem.

Includes:

- aiding the development of ideas
- asking questions to stimulate reasoning
- inviting/giving contributions and reactions
- asking for/giving clarification
- making and responding to suggestions

Mediation as 'soft skills'

Mediation Strategies

Aiding access to information and ideas by:

- **Linking to previous knowledge**

- **Expanding and elaborating on content**

- **Eliminating digressions or non-relevant information**

- **Breaking down complicated information into smaller component parts**

- **Adjusting language, style and register**

- **Adjusting speech-rate, using verbal and non-verbal emphasis**

Online Interaction and Collaboration

The new Online Interaction scales include descriptors relating to:

- **making postings and responding to comments**
- **engaging in online exchanges and real-time interactions**
- **more extensive online collaborations (e.g. in business / academia)**
- **initiating, maintaining, closing interactions**
- **adapting style and register to suit the online context / interlocutor / reader**
- **repairing misunderstandings**

Activity: collapsing boundaries between domains

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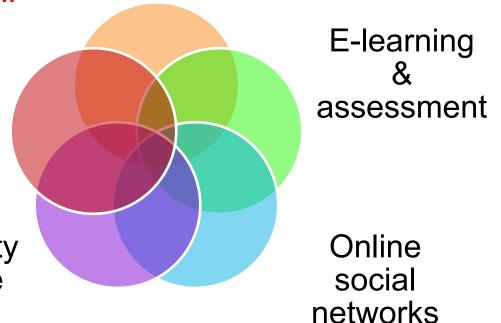
Group task:
Invent / present a learning activity with a maximum of 3 general phases, and at least 1 plausible communicative aim from the list given for C1

Face to face learning & assessment

'Authentic' media

E-learning & assessment

Scoring for overlap
1 circle (no overlap) = 0
2 circles = 2 points
3 circles = 3 points
4 circles = 4 points
5 circles = 5 points

Community language learning

Online social networks

To recap

- **Disruption requires re-skilling and up-skilling**

- **The CEFR refocuses language learning on transferrable competences**

- **The new Companion Volume provides scaled descriptors of 'soft' communication skills such as mediating communication**

- **These descriptors can transparently organise learning and assessment for soft skills training, improved learning consultation and progress reporting**

Thank you!

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www.eaquals.org

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