# CEFR Companion Volume implementation toolbox

Video scripts for “Mediation: Mediation strategies”

**Video: Applying the CEFR Companion Volume scale of Mediation strategies**

# Slide 1

In the section “Introduction to mediation”, we looked at the definition of mediation strategies and the different categories of mediation strategies described in the CEFR Companion Volume. In this section, we will focus on descriptors of mediation strategies and how they can be used to develop a classroom activity. We shall do this in connection with a classroom task: Presenting the latest research in the field of studies. You might find it useful if you download this activity from part 1.4 of this section and read through it before you watch the video. The focus of this video will be on how to use the scales of *Mediation Strategies* to help design a purposeful communicative language activity and how to help the students achieve the goal of the activity in the most effective way.

# Slide 2

I will start by reviewing the definition of mediation strategies presented in the CEFR Companion Volume. Then I will briefly go through the categories of mediation strategies. Finally, I will show how descriptors of mediation strategies can be used to structure the description of a classroom task and give guidelines to students on how to transfer information from an academic text to an academic presentation so that they can successfully present research results.

# Slide 3

This is how mediation strategies are viewed in the CEFR Companion Volume:

**“Mediation strategies are the techniques employed to clarify meaning and facilitate understanding**. As a mediator, the user/learner may need to shuttle between people, between texts, between types of discourse and between languages, varieties or modalities, depending on the mediation context.” (Council of Europe 2020: 117-118).

In other words, mediation strategies help language users explain and understand the communicated messages during the actual process of mediation. **They relate to the way the source text is processed for the recipient.** Depending on the context in which mediation takes place, the source text might require a change of register, style or tone. For example, during a presentation the source text might need a change of formality, simplifying the description of a process by breaking down the process into stages or illustrating it with visuals.

# Slide 4

The CEFR Companion Volume presents two categories of mediation strategies: strategies used to explain a new concept and strategies used to simplify a text. Strategies for explaining a new concept are divided into ways of linking to previous knowledge, breaking down complicated information and adapting language.

Ways of linking to previous knowledge are:

* posing questions to encourage people to activate prior knowledge;
* making comparisons and/or links between new and prior knowledge;
* or providing examples and definitions.

Breaking down complicated information can be achieved by the following strategies:

* breaking the description of a process into a series of steps;
* presenting ideas or instructions as bullet points;
* or presenting separately the main points in a chain of argument. Finally, language can be adapted by:
* paraphrasing;
* adapting delivery in terms of speed, style or register;
* or explaining technical terminology.

Strategies used for simplifying text, on the other hand, are divided into means of amplifying a dense text and means of streamlining a text which is too long or repetitive.

Amplifying a dense text can be achieved by:

* using repetition and redundancy, for example by paraphrasing the text in different ways;
* modifying style to explain things more explicitly;
* or giving examples.

Lastly, means of streamlining a text are:

* highlighting key information;
* eliminating repetition and digressions;
* or excluding what is not relevant for the audience.

# Slide 5

Now let’s move on to how we can use the scales in planning a mediation classroom activity.

I am going to demonstrate how the CEFR Companion Volume descriptors for mediation strategies can be useful in structuring and carrying out a class activity for a group of science or engineering students at the 2nd or 3rd cycle of university studies who learn English at C1 CEFR level.

As usual, we need to start with a careful analysis of the needs of our students and consider the situations in which our students are likely to use the English language in their real-life context.

Well, a situation in which science or engineering students in the 2nd or 3rd cycle of studies need to read academic research articles, and prepare team presentations of research results described in the articles seems very likely to happen.

So the aims of the activity are to:

* read an academic research article to extract salient details;
* select relevant points from the text and transcode information to the presentation format;
* collaborate to prepare a team presentation on a topic related to the field of studies;
* and present the information to a group of students.

This is a likely target language use situation, in which the language user needs to mediate texts of different genres. Such a communicative situation is very demanding both cognitively and linguistically and making use of mediation strategies might ease the task to a large extent.

When planning a classroom activity of this type, the CEFR Companion Volume may be very helpful as it provides an ample number of descriptors for mediation strategies that are necessary to accomplish the communicative tasks involved in the situation of presenting research results described in an academic article.

The scales which might be taken into account are:

* Linking to previous knowledge, a technique frequently used in presentations to help clarify concepts and processes.
* Breaking down complicated information, which is a technique often employed in presentations to explain a difficult idea or process.
* Adapting language, as the language of articles is more formal than the language of presentations. Articles and presentations are also different in the way they are structured and the specific phraseology they use.
* Amplifying a dense text, because academic articles are very often written concisely and use many technical terms.
* Streamlining a text, because there might be some information in the article which could be unnecessary for the presentations, e. g. detailed descriptions of the processes or methodology

Now let’s have a look at the descriptors selected for this classroom activity.

# Slide 6

Let’s start with *Strategies to explain a new concept*. Several descriptors have been chosen from the scale of *Linking to previous knowledge*,

The relevant descriptor from the C1 level is:

* Can spontaneously pose a series of questions to encourage people to think about their prior knowledge of an abstract issue and to help them establish a link to what is going to be explained.

# Slide 7

The scale of *Linking to previous knowledge*, at the B2 level, turned out to be very useful too because the descriptors here explain in more detail what is meant by linking to previous knowledge:

* Can clearly explain the connections between the goals of the session and the personal or professional interests and experiences of the participant(s).
* Can formulate questions and give feedback to encourage people to make connections to previous knowledge and experiences.
* Can explain a new concept or procedure by comparing and contrasting it to one that people are already familiar with.

# Slide 8

The next scale in *Strategies to explain a new concept* that was considered for the activity of presenting research results was *Breaking down complicated information*, at the C1 CEFR level.

* Can facilitate understanding of a complex issue by highlighting and categorising the main points, presenting them in a logically connected pattern, and reinforcing the message by repeating the key aspects in different ways.

# Slide 9

Another descriptor selected to help students explain the concepts they have read about in an academic text and then present them in the form of a presentation comes from *Adapting language*, at the C1 CEFR level:

* Can adapt their language (e. g. syntax, idiomaticity, jargon) in order to make a complex specialist topic accessible to recipients who are not familiar with it.

# Slide 10

As regards *Strategies to simplify a text,* the relevant descriptors in the scale of *Amplifying a dense text*

at the C1 level are:

* Can make complex, challenging content more accessible by explaining difficult aspects more explicitly and adding helpful detail.
* Can make the main points contained in a complex text more accessible to the target audience by adding redundancy, explaining, and modifying style and register.

# Slide 11

The last descriptor selected for this academic presentation activity comes from the scale of

*Streamlining a text*, at the C1 CEFR level

The selected descriptor relevant to this activity is:

* Can reorganize a complex source text in order to focus on the points of most relevance to the target audience.

# Slide 12

Let’s move on and have a look at the actual classroom activity: The teacher divides students into teams and asks them to prepare team presentations of recent research in their field of studies. The presentations should be based on real academic articles which have been chosen by the teacher; alternately students can choose the articles on their own. The presentations will be given in front of the whole class and they will be followed by a discussion of the significance and application prospects of the research.

Stage 1 After choosing the article within each team, students individually read the text and decide on the relevant key information that should be presented and mark appropriate parts of the text.

Stage 2 Students meet in their teams to compare, discuss and make a decision on:

* the title of the presentation;
* the main parts of the presentation;
* the content of the parts;
* and the division of work.

Stage 3 After deciding on the title, the main parts and the content of the presentation, students proceed to do their tasks, prepare the individual slides and practice their parts, following the steps:

* selecting and underlining key points and sentences;
* simplifying the text by excluding repetitive and non-relevant information;
* taking notes and paraphrasing the original sentences;
* simplifying the text by changing the register appropriate for the audience;
* adapting the language of the article for the purposes of the presentation.

There are several techniques for language adaptation that can be found in the descriptors of the scales of *Mediation strategies*. I will present them on the next slide of this presentation.

# Slide 14

Adapting the language of the article for the purposes of presenting research results described in an academic article requires the use of several techniques. The CEFR Companion Volume’s scale of *Mediation strategies* provides a framework for the development of guidelines with reference to these techniques. The table in this slide shows some of them.

|  |
| --- |
| **Presenting the latest research in the field of studies** |
| Strategies used to explain a new concept | Strategies used to simplify a text |
| *Linking to previous knowledge* | *Breaking down complicated information* | *Adapting language* | *Amplifying a dense text* | *Streamlining a text* |
| * using comparisons to the background- specific purpose knowledge of the audience
 | * breaking down complicated information and presenting parts of the process separately
 | * employing signposting language characteristic for presentations
 | * adding illustrations or examples
* preparing definitions of technical terms and explanations
 | * placing the information on the slides in bullet points, tables and diagrams
 |

For example, students should be encouraged to use comparisons to the background field-specific knowledge that the audience shares which will help explain the complex issues and ideas presented in the article.

While presenting complex issues, they should be advised to break down complicated information and present parts of the process separately.

While giving the presentation, they should be reminded to use signposting language that will help the audience take in the information.

When preparing the slides, students should be reminded to use illustrations, graphs, tables diagrams, examples and bullet points that will help present the difficult ideas in a more accessible manner.

They should prepare definitions of technical terms and explanations of concepts that the audience is likely to be unfamiliar with.

# Slide 15

In Stage 4, after preparing the slides, students practise giving the presentation in teams (students practise giving presentations within their individual teams).

In Stage 5, students deliver the presentation in front of the class. Each presentation is followed by a short discussion of the significance of the research and possible practical applications.

The aim of the activity described in this presentation is to teach mediation strategies. Therefore, to achieve the best possible results in the teaching and learning process, it should be preceded with a series of exercises on techniques of paraphrasing texts (such as the use of synonyms or the change of the grammatical structure of the sentence) and learning how to prepare and deliver a successful presentation.

# Slide 16

If you wish to prepare a similar activity for your students, you can see here possible sources of academic articles that can be used to prepare and conduct such a class or a series of classes:

<https://journals.pan.pl/dlibra> <https://www.springer.com/gp>

<https://www.elsevier.com/open-access/open-access-journals>

# Slide 17

Bibliography

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