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Developing CEFR-based mediation rating scales for standardized exams at state language schools in Andalucia (Spain)

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In 2017, the publication of a new national curriculum for the teaching of foreign languages at Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas – the network of state Official Schools of Languages – in Spain signaled the top-down inclusion of mediation as a part of the already existing standardized proficiency exams to certify the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. The Junta de Andalucia [Andalusian Regional Government] commissioned a team of four educators from those schools to develop the rating scales for mediation that would be used as evidence of language competence in certification assessment from 2019 onwards. This study addresses the 5-year challenging process of developing rating scales aligned with mediation descriptors in the CEFR Companion Volume (COE 2018, 2020; Spanish version 2021; henceforth CEFR/CV), adapted to their specific regional educational context, and informed by classroom practice. We describe our educational context, and the changes experienced from 2019 to 2023: from merging mediation into the written interaction task and rating scale, through genuine written mediation tasks and rating scales, to an eventual hybrid model at present. In this study, we also aim to reach some conclusions, inviting the use of the latest rating scales we have developed for official language certification.

Keywords: linguistic mediation, mediation strategies, assessment of mediation, rating scales, standardized testing, CEFR/CV descriptor adaptation, linguistic mediation tasks

1 Introduction (educational context)

The Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas (Official Schools of Languages; henceforth EEOOII) in Spain, unparalleled in other parts of the world, are a network of publicly funded schools dedicated to the specialized teaching and certification of proficiency in modern languages for adults. They aim to provide timely criterion-referenced information on candidates' level of language competence to allow their

students to advance in their coursework or enable both students and external examinees to certificate their level¹.

In the academic year 2022-2023, the 52 EEOOII existing in the autonomous region of Andalucia teach up to eleven general languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish – to 68,690 students in either face-to-face, blended or distance courses. Not only may the students in our schools obtain official certification of language skills but also external examinees through annual official standardized examinations.

By Royal Decree 1041/2017, of 22 December, the Spanish Ministry of Education reformed the 2006 core curriculum for EEOOII. The 2006 curriculum aimed to align the three levels then taught at Spanish EEOOII (basic, intermediate and advanced) with those in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (COE 2001) and defined corresponding competences as follows: A2 for basic level (2 academic years of study), B1 for intermediate level (1 year), and B2 for advanced level (2 years). The 2006 curriculum also required annual standardized certification exams for candidates at intermediate (B1) and advanced (B2) levels. These exams tested listening and reading comprehension, spoken interaction and production, and written interaction and production².

To approach the mediation concept within the CEFR framework, the Spanish Ministry of Education introduced reforms to the official certification tests through Royal Decree 1/2019 of 11 January. These reforms encompassed two main changes: the redefinition of proficiency levels (Intermediate-B1, Intermediate-B2, Advanced-C1, and Advanced-C2) and the inclusion of mediation as an assessed competence. However, our assessments have not fully embraced the holistic vision of the CEFR/CV, as they do not yet incorporate plurilingualism and the broader context of the action-oriented approach. It is important to note, that our exams are context-specific and should not be compared to those in Greece, Germany, or Austria.

"En el ámbito europeo se ha incluido la mediación en algunos procesos certificativos de alto impacto, como [...] los exámenes certificativos del sistema de Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas de España, principalmente con actividades de mediación textual." [In the European context, mediation has been integrated in certain high-impact certification processes, such as [...] certification exams in the Spanish Official Schools of Languages system, mainly through textual mediation activities] (Sanchez Cuadrado et al. 2022: 214; our translation).

The reform also permitted certification of partial competences for candidates who could not attain the certification of overall competence. The requirements to pass the overall competence test is a minimum score of 50% of the total score for each of the five parts of the test, and additionally, a minimum score of 65% of the total score of the test.

Complying with this regulation, the Regional Decree 499/2019, of 26 June, reorganized the levels of competence taught and certified at the EEOOII in Andalucia. The basic level was split into two sublevels (Basic-A1 and Basic-A2, one academic year each), Intermediate-B1 remained unchanged, the advanced level became Intermediate-B2 (two years), and two new levels were added: Advanced-C1 (two years) and Advanced-C2 (one year). The Regional Decree also defined the teaching-learning process and evaluation procedures for the intermediate and advanced levels through overall competence courses and standardized tests that include five language activities: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, spoken interaction and production, written interaction and production, and meditation.

The Order of 11 November 2020 that elaborates on the aforementioned Regional Decree established that passing the overall competence test would allow (a) promotion to the next course within the same level and (b) promotion to the first course of the next level for students who were in the last course of

^{1.} In this article, we will use the term candidates to refer to both students and external examinees. Only when the differentiation is relevant to the context will we use either of the other two terms.

^{2.} In this article, we use the CEFR term interaction, while it is rendered as co-production in the original Spanish documents and appendices for contextual authenticity.

a given level. Development of the core curriculum and certification at Andalusian EEOOII are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Development of core curriculum and certification at Andalusian EEOOII

Core curriculum 2006	Core certification system 2006	Core curriculum 2017	Core certification system 2017
Basic level-A2	Exams organized by each school	Basic level-A1	Exams organized by each school
Internal distributed D4	Annual standardized certification exams:	Basic level-A2 Intermediate level-B1	Annual standardized
Intermediate level-B1	-listening comprehension	Intermediate level-B2	certification exams: -listening
	-reading comprehension	Advanced level-C1	comprehension -reading
Advanced level-B2	-spoken interaction and production -written interaction and production	Advanced level-C2	comprehension -spoken interaction and production -written interaction and production -mediation

In 2019, for the first time, Andalusian EEOOII taught Advanced-C1 and Advanced-C2 levels, and included mediation activity in class at all levels. This meant "seeing language as action in experiential learning" (Piccardo, North and Goodier 2019: 18) and consequently designing mediation tasks that consider concepts in the action-oriented approach (e.g., real-life social agency; situated action in meaningful social contexts with conditions and constraints; purposeful action with concrete goals). Due to the limitations arising from the rushed implementation of mediation at EEOOII and the need for a quick solution that would not compromise exam administration, mediation in certification exams was initially equated with text-based activities, primarily involving information transmission and data explanation. Moreover, it was stipulated that certification tasks should always be completed individually within the same language. This narrow interpretation of mediation resulted from the monolingual context and traditional assessment practices that evaluate language skills and candidates in isolation, thus neglecting crucial CEFR/CV concepts, such as plurilingualism, interculturality and co-construction of meaning. Unfortunately, these misinterpretations, lacking support in the literature or specific regulations, persist to this day.

The regional Department of Education [Consejería de Educación] of the autonomous regional government [Junta de Andalucía] calls for certification exams annually, although only some Andalusian Schools of Languages certify all levels in all languages every year, depending on their local context, target population and the language courses they provide. Table 2 shows the 2022-2023 offers.

Table 2. Call for standardized certification exams in 2022-2023 at Andalusian Schools of Languages

Level	Language	Candidates
Basic-A2	Any taught at our schools	External examinees
Intermediate-B1	Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese,	External examinees
Intermediate-B2	Spanish	Students at our schools
Advanced-C1	English, French, German, Spanish	External examinees
		Students at our schools
Advanced-C2	English	External examinees
		Students at our schools

For Basic-A1 and Basic-A2, each school conducts its own certification exams, although it is worth noting that most schools usually use standardized assessment tools to grade and evaluate the performance of their candidates.

Each year, the Department of Education appoints a commission of teachers from EEOOII in our region coordinating various sub-commissions responsible for designing standardized tests that will be administered simultaneously, in June and September, at every school.

Between 2011 and 2016, the test developers were teachers selected by educational authorities based on their demonstrated knowledge and prior experience, acquired independently without any training or support by the administration. Since the appointment of Antonio Romero Rodríguez as General Coordinator in 2017, test developers have been chosen based on their training in test design, typically acquired through Local Teacher Training schools (CEP). The mission of the teachers commissioned is to adapt the certification exams to the characteristics of our candidates so that they reflect the general content and spirit of the CEFR to a feasible extent without altering the already existing exam structure or their duration excessively.

2 Background and development of the current mediation rating scales

This section discusses the development and changes made to mediation rating scales in our context over five years from 2018 to 2023. Following the principles of design-based research (Design-based Research Collective 2003), development took a cyclical approach, with several phases that involved experimentation and teacher feedback, before the current operational versions were finalized. Initially, a unique mediation rating scale for all languages and levels was integrated into the written interaction scale; later it became a separate written mediation rating scale, and eventually evolved into a hybrid model, different for oral and written mediation.

2.1 The preliminary approach—a compromise

In 2019, the authors were commissioned with four main objectives. First, we were asked to adapt the existing rating scales for spoken and written interaction and production to the new evaluation regulations and the CEFR/CV spirit. The revised rating scales were to be used for all languages and levels in the academic year 2018-2019. Second, our team had to create rating scales that would evaluate the then new activity of mediation. Third, by writing the corresponding test specifications, we should guide the teams of test-writers in creating mediation assessment tasks for different languages and levels. Finally, we were asked to create the test specifications for examiners and candidates.

We faced a challenge when developing a mediation rating scale during the academic year 2018-2019 due to the minimal period between the publication of the Royal Decree that ordered the inclusion of mediation in our certification exams (January 2019) and the date of the exam administration (June 2019).

There was a lack of reference materials and regulations for mediation examinations in Spain, so the team had to rely on our theoretical knowledge of the CEFR (COE 2001) and the CEFR/CV (COE 2018), and also expertise and analysis of mediation practice in other European countries, which did not always match the local educational context.

Our team focused on developing mediation rating scales referenced to the CEFR/CV categories of mediating a text and mediation strategies since linguistic mediation involves conveying information from a text to someone who does not have access to it, and efficient communication through text manipulation is common practice in the teaching-learning and evaluation processes at our EEOOII.

A significant challenge encountered was the considerable resistance from various stakeholders, all reluctant to accept the new regulation on mediation and the changes it implied. Teachers, examiners and test-writers rejected mediation on the grounds that they lacked knowledge and training in mediation, and had no time to learn, teach or evaluate it. Candidates argued they had not received sufficient training on how to practice or prepare for mediation tests. Thus, a trade-off was adopted: it was decided to integrate mediation as a component of the written interaction task rather than as a separate task due to concerns about aspects, such as the following:

- adding too much time to the 2019 test, as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and written interaction and production are administered in one single session for feasibility reasons;
- placing a heavy cognitive burden on candidates at the end of such a session;
- having an inopportune new mediation rating scale with criteria, sub-criteria and descriptors of levels of competence for such a small part of the task concerned.

With so little room for maneuver, our new multi-level, multi-language rating scale for written interaction and mediation could only replace the written interaction assessment criterion of Coherence/Cohesion with *Coherence/Cohesion/Mediation* and the sub-criterion Use of communicative functions with the *Use of communicative and mediation functions* (see Appendix A³).

This first attempt only represented the initial stages of the intuitive phase of rating scale development described by North and Piccardo (2016: 34-35) and ultimately ended in complete failure. Both the so-called integrated task and its corresponding rating scale were severely criticized by all stakeholders at all levels and in all languages. The criticism was mostly informal and conveyed through written comments by examiners, generally lacking any theoretical basis. However, this move towards a prospective integration of mediation into the written interaction task in fact had several benefits. Firstly, it diluted the importance of mediation in the evaluation, while giving candidates the chance not to fail the paper on the grounds of the then loathed mediation component. In so doing, it equally safeguarded candidates and examiners unfamiliar with mediation at the time. Furthermore, it provided test-writers and examiners with additional time to prepare for the next standardized certification test session (June 2020), when mediation would require at least two different tasks and evaluation independently from the other modes of communication.

2.2 Preparing for separate mediation test tasks

In April 2019, while the first edition of the new certification exams in Andalucia was being salvaged by the merger of mediation and written interaction referred to above, the regional educational authorities, the test-coordinating commissions, and our team agreed that subsequent examination sessions demanded mediation-specific tasks and rating scales further aligned with the updated curriculum and the CEFR/CV. For our team, that implied developing an entirely new set of rating scales for oral and written interaction and production, as well as for mediation.

Starting in September 2019, EEOOII requested increased training opportunities for teachers to learn about the concept, teaching, learning, and evaluation of mediation. Local Teacher Training Schools (CEP)

^{3.} Appendices A, B, and C show the actual rating scales in Spanish but can be translated into English upon request.

responded by organizing countless workshops introducing teachers to CEFR/CV mediation activities and strategies. They provided tailored training on the implications of linguistic mediation for teaching, although not yet for assessment.

Although the educational authorities, test-writers, and our team initially agreed that having one oral mediation task plus one written mediation task was the most comprehensive model, as attested by the Greek National Foreign Language Exam System (KPG: Dendrinos 2006), it was finally decided to have just two written mediation tasks, for various reasons. The oral session of the tests (production/sustained monologue, interaction/paired dialogue, and mediation) would have increased from a 15-minute performance per candidate to an estimated 25 minutes, which would not have been feasible for schools with thousands of candidates. Besides, it was felt that it would impact negatively on candidates' and examiners' fatigue, thus increasing their resistance to mediation, which remained salient.

Incorporating a second written mediation task into the test seemed the best solution at hand. Writing would allow candidates to consciously "mobilise *all* their competences [...] and strategies" (Piccardo, North and Goodier 2019: 18) and all their "available resources: cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and cultural" (Piccardo 2019: 193). While requiring more effort from examiners to correct, it would also give them additional time to process the candidate's response and to readjust the marking process if necessary. Overall, it was still deemed too early for teachers, test-writers, examiners, and candidates to work on oral mediation tasks to certify language competence.

In the summer of 2019, the team began creating four new rating scales (oral and written interaction and production) for Intermediate-B1, Intermediate-B2 and Advanced-C1 levels, plus a unique mediation rating scale common to both tasks in all levels. At the same time, our team gained valuable insights from various training sessions and expert meetings which greatly informed the development and outcome of our work, particularly the consultancy by Dave Allan at Norwich Institute for Language Education from which a preliminary version of the 2019-2020 rating scales stemmed.

The new rating scales, containing criteria, sub-criteria and competence level descriptors for each language activity, were made available to schools in January 2020 (see Appendix B). From January until March, dissemination sessions conducted by Maria-Teresa Berceruelo, Angel Diaz, and Antonio Romero for teachers, test-writers and examiners from each of the 52 schools in our region proved pivotal: they introduced the new rating scales, offering participants an opportunity to standardize interpretations of the assessment criteria while using them to evaluate authentic mediation, and this enabled ensuing cascade training in every school.

Despite the deferral of face-to-face examination sessions until September and October 2020 due to COVID-19, the regional Department of Education eventually received informal positive feedback from teachers, examiners and candidates on the tests administered, thus confirming the positive impact of the previous training on the utilization of the new rating scales, as well as the additional time provided to understand mediation and work with it, even online.

In 2020-2021, our team faced the challenge of developing new mediation rating scales for the Basic-A2 and Advanced-C2 levels, where none had previously existed (the other levels would continue being assessed with the 2019-2020 rating scale, provided in Appendix B). Additionally, EEOOII volunteer teachers and examiners in Spain piloted our proposed written mediation and oral and written comprehension tasks. While the validation process for mediation tasks was less rigorous than comprehension tasks, our test-writers refined the tasks based on respondent feedback. Alongside answer keys for comprehension tasks, test-writers provided model responses for the two written mediation tasks as a reference for examiners.

While sub-commission members developing tests at the same proficiency level collaborated with each other, no regular standardization sessions were conducted across various levels or languages. At present, as per the aforementioned Order of 11 November 2020, the head of each didactic department in every school annually arranges a minimum of two standardization meetings for all teaching staff in

the respective department. Attendance at these sessions is obligatory. These meetings aim to ensure consistent grading of certification exams for all proficiency levels administered within each school and across EEOOII, promoting a uniform interpretation of descriptors and the consistent application of rating scales when the teachers take on the role of examiners.

Based on the generally positive informal feedback received from the 2020-2021 evaluation of mediation – probably due to the deeper understanding of the concept of mediation brought about by the widespread incorporation of mediation tasks by teachers and in textbooks, alongside increased familiarity with the rating scales – it was decided to replicate the same assessment procedure and instruments in the subsequent academic year 2021-2022. This produced very similar satisfactory results.

2.3 Introducing an oral mediation task

After four years, all stakeholders agreed to introduce an oral mediation task and not solely assess written mediation to align with the evaluation of both oral and written texts in interaction and production. As this will add time to the existing oral exam, written mediation has been reintegrated into the written task again but, this year (2023), two separate rating scales will evaluate that written task, one being for interaction, and the other for mediation.

Once more in October 2022, therefore, the Andalusian Department of Education commissioned our team to create a new set of rating scales that comprised differentiated rating scales for oral and written mediation at the Basic-A2, Intermediate-B1/B2, and Advanced-C1/C2 levels. The challenge was to accurately differentiate competence levels in mediation, especially between Intermediate-B1 and Intermediate-B2, and Advanced-C1 and Advanced-C2, since this distinction can be ambiguous in our educational context, as the lack of illustrative descriptors in some CEFR/CV mediation scales shows.

In formulating the assessment criteria, sub-criteria and descriptors of competence level for our new mediation rating scales, we had to ensure that phrasing was (a) aligned with the CEFR/CV framework and mediation descriptors, (b) consistent with the existing rating scales for oral and written interaction and production, (c) highly similar within the whole set of 2022-2023 mediation scales, and (d) applicable to all languages.

Unfortunately, we managed only to partially defy traditional practice in our context, which fosters the mistaken belief that lengthy wordings will enhance candidates' and examiners' comprehension of the concept behind assessment criteria, sub-criteria and descriptors. Well aware of the verbose wording in our formulations and the need for simplification and precision, we hope that in future editions, this issue can be further addressed.

Based on Chapters 4 and 5 of CEFR 2001 and significant sections in the CEFR/CV (COE 2020: 90-108; 117-122; 123-128; 180; 198-224; its 2021 Spanish version), and on our previous experience, our team has refined the existing evaluation construct for assessing mediation competence. We revised the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, skills and abilities that are truly relevant to the communicative competence of the candidates in our context, informed by various sources, including the literature, classroom practice, student profiles, and consultations with stakeholders. Finally, we re-examined our curriculum and identified the aspects that are indicative of language use for mediation purposes in the three different levels that will be evaluated as Andalusian EEOOII, such as the domains, situations, themes, tasks and communicative purposes, communicative activities and strategies, and texts (see Appendix C).

Given that "in mediation [...] the focus is on [...] passing on new information in an appropriate form" (COE 2020: 90), appropriateness is the key, not so much correctness. By eliminating assessment criteria, such as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range and control, and phonological/orthographic control as much as possible, our rating scales minimize those aspects of linguistic competence that will be tested elsewhere in the certification tests. Therefore, examiners should not penalize candidates for infrequent or irrelevant errors that do not interfere with the target audience's understanding of the relevant information relayed in the mediated text.

We agree that mediation aims at "the interpretation of (social) meanings which are then to be communicated/relayed to others when they do not understand a text or a speaker fully or partially" (Dendrinos 2006: 12). Since our C1 and C2 candidates are typically adept at interpreting and explaining implied social and cultural aspects, hidden meanings, irony, humor, non-visible components of visual texts, etc., they are able to express personal responses to texts that encompass "broader and deeper interpretations, supporting them with details and examples" (CEFR/CV 2020: 106). Therefore, sociolinguistic appropriateness is addressed by the B1/B2 sub-criterion of *Selection and/or transmission of relevant information*, which expands to include *interpretation* in the C1/C2 level.

As the mediator and target audience collaboratively construct the text, while the mediator's individual and social dimensions interact in this process (discourse competence), we have introduced the subcriterion *Organization of the mediated information*, which evaluates the coherence/cohesion and fluency of the mediated text exclusively regarding intelligibility by the target audience, since other parts of our 2022-2023 certification tests already assess the other aspects of discourse competence and of functional and design competences.

The other area that we strived to address was strategies. Strategies are "a means the language user exploits to mobilize and balance his or her resources, to activate skills and procedures, to fulfil the demands of communication in context and successfully complete the task in question in the most comprehensive or most economical way feasible depending on his or her precise purpose" (COE 2001: 57). We have linked plurilingual and pluricultural competence to strategies by adding two new subcriteria to the criterion of *Mediation strategies*:

- Range and effectiveness of linguistic mediation strategies to select/expand/synthesize and/or explain relevant-to-task information from the source text(s). Although for readability of the rating scales, this reads as a unique sub-criterion, the performance level descriptors in the scales clarify the two distinct sub-criteria: range on the one hand and effectiveness on the other. Also, selection and/or amplification strategies are required in level B1/B2, whereas synthesizing and/or explaining are typical in C1/C2.
- Use of the mediator's own grammar structure and vocabulary to make the message fully comprehensible to the target audience⁴. This criterion is grounded, first, on "the practical, functional ability to exploit plurilingualism for comprehension [of the source text(s)]" (CEFR/CV 2020: 126), which explains why strategies for selecting information are assessed. Second, on the ability to exploit "all available linguistic resources to communicate effectively [...] in a classic mediation situation" (COE 2020: 127). This explains why in our context, depending on the language assessed, mediation may take place in one language or across languages, since "Seeing learners as plurilingual, pluricultural beings means allowing them to use all their linguistic resources when necessary" (COE 2020: 30).

3 Discussion

Although a more rigorous and thorough validation process, including statistical analysis of results, is still required, we have used the methods of Piccardo and North (2019) and the COE (2001: 30 and 2020: 42) to develop our 2022-2023 rating scales for mediation. We can claim that they have some degree of face validity in the context of Andalusian EEOOII. This assertion is based on the following factors:

- Their formulation draws on the theoretical knowledge, reading and experience of our own team and of the Norwich Institute for Language Education in the field of developing descriptors for assessment.
- They were developed considering the applicability in context and making initial adaptations of CEFR Chapters 4 and 5 (COE 2001) and those CEFR/CV descriptor scales (COE 2020) specifically
- 4. In the oral mediation rating scales, this sub-criterion reads as Use of the mediator's own linguistic, paralinguistic and extra-linguistic resources to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience.

- relevant to our context: mediation activities (see Appendix D), mediation strategies (all five scales), and plurilingual and pluricultural competence (all three scales).
- They were developed through our team's knowledge of theoretical work, the analysis of currently existing scales of mediation proficiency in EEOOII and in some other national and international institutions, and the analysis of feedback received during and after the practical workshops and training sessions that authors Angel Diaz and Antonio Romero conducted in 2023. Andalusian teachers were informed about and discussed the implications of each proposed criterion, subcriterion and descriptor, and were explicitly questioned about their clarity, their utility to assess mediation and their relevance in our particular context and provided feedback.

There was no formal qualitative or quantitative validation of those respondents' answers, but the vast majority verbalized that our proposed 2022-2023 mediation criteria, sub-criteria and descriptors:

- correspond to levels Basic-A2, Intermediate-B1/B2, and Advanced-C1/C2 existing at EEOOII in Andalucia, which, in turn, relate to the CEFR common reference levels;
- are useful and relevant in the context of Andalusian EEOOII since they (a) coincide to a great extent with their personal interpretation when assessing representative samples of performance and (b) describe actual learner achievement in EEOOII in Andalucia and do thus represent realistic objectives;
- respond to the three criteria of brevity, clarity, and transparency, and positive formulation outlined in CEFR Appendix A (COE 2001: 205-207), although some of the descriptors are 24 rather than 20 words in length.

However, we should note that they have not yet met the two essential and related criteria of (a) independence/stand-alone integrity or (b) definiteness/precision, as differentiation of degrees of skill in performing mediation tasks still depends mostly on ambiguous qualifiers which might produce diverse interpretations by different examiners.

Ultimately, the 2022-2023 criteria, sub-criteria and descriptors of mediation proficiency in our rating scales do, however, constitute claims about the progression in mediation competence of candidates aiming at A2, B1/B2 or C1/C2 certification at EEOOII in Andalucia. At present, those claims are considered acceptable by teachers, test-writers, examiners and candidates.

4 Conclusions (lessons learned)

All parties involved (teachers, test-writers, examiners, and candidates) are still adjusting to the idea of mediation and its impact on language education and evaluation. Significant progress has been made in familiarizing teachers, students, examiners, and candidates with linguistic mediation. However, this progress has led to a narrower interpretation than the original CEFR/CV concept, as it primarily focuses on text mediation within a single language as an isolated task. Thus, it tends to overlook plurilingual, intercultural aspects, and the holistic nature of the action-oriented approach, in line with Levy and Figueras (2022), who recommend a stronger emphasis on the action-oriented approach in various Spanish educational settings, including university language centers and EEOOII. Continuing the described five-year adaptation process is essential to gradually incorporate the more comprehensive aspects of the action-oriented approach and challenge traditional classroom and assessment practices. This adaptation process will certainly demand cooperation among all stakeholders, who also need to be given time to reflect, understand and agree.

Such necessary and urgent adaptation in our context could be accelerated if our educational authorities provided teachers, test-writers and examiners with adequate, well-timed training sessions and the material and human resources to develop rigorously validated certification examinations. Making candidates familiar with mediation through classroom activities followed by reflection and through external dissemination activities is also essential.

Moreover, teaching, learning and assessment should be aligned so that classroom practice informs evaluation practice. In our context, this would imply redefining all three aspects of our language education construct to overcome a potentially negative washback effect (mediation was first perceived as an evaluation requisite and, therefore, it has impacted education, rather than vice-versa). Furthermore, to fully reflect the genuine spirit of the CEFR/CV, assessment tests should be restructured by placing their main focus on mediation and production and the core concepts of the action-oriented approach.

Thus far, the top-down, trial-and-error method we have used to develop mediation rating scales for the certified official assessment has allowed the following progression. From merging mediation into an interaction task and having a unique multi-level rating scale, we went through two written mediation tasks (both evaluated with identical multi-level rating scales). Eventually arrived at having one written and one oral mediation task, each with its corresponding rating scale differentiated into levels A, B and C. From having mediation in one language, we arrived at mediation across languages in certain of the languages taught.

There is no doubt we are just initiating a long process and that our products are still a work in progress. However, the steps taken will certainly aid further development in immediate future years.

In a nutshell, "[t]here are more chances that [CEFR/CV descriptor adaptation to our context] will be successful if all stakeholders are involved if there are multiple entry points to the CEFR, and if there is ongoing, long-term professional development to provide the necessary support for practitioners" (Piccardo, North and Maldina 2019: 121).

5 Expected relevance and usability of the 2022-2023 rating scales

Our next objective is to validate our current mediation rating scales, criteria, sub-criteria, and descriptors through a collaboration project with the University of Jaen, which will commence shortly. In this way, we intend to have them refined for the 2024-2025 standardized official certification exams.

In the meantime, our team encourages the experimentation with our rating scales *as is* in other educational institutions, either in the context of formative assessment (for example, in the evaluation of mock exams aiming at preparing students for actual certification tests) or even in actual examination contexts. "Cuando los estudiantes son conscientes de qué elementos del producto final y del propio proceso de mediación se valorarán de forma positiva, actúan estratégicamente en pos de esos objetivos concretos y, a menudo, sus comportamientos se corresponden con descriptores del MCER VC de un nivel más alto que el requerido por la actividad". [When students become aware of which elements of the final product and of the mediation process itself will be positively valued, they act strategically towards those specific goals, and their behaviors often correspond to higher-level CEFR/VC descriptors than that required by the activity] (Berceruelo Pino 2022: 147; authors' own translation).

In the hope that other institutions worldwide will find our work useful, we invite readers to experiment with our mediation rating scales and visit our autonomous regional government's website⁵ to access the 2022-2023 candidate's guide, rating scales and past papers. We welcome collaboration in future projects and feedback on our work, to continue this endless but fascinating endeavor to successfully integrate the processes of teaching, learning and assessing mediation in our respective contexts.

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7 Biographies

María-Teresa Berceruelo Pino (BA English Philology, BA Translation and Interpreting). An EEOOII English teacher (1988-2022), she wrote and coordinated official certification exams, developed the English-Clevel curriculum, and experimented with and validated CEFR/CV mediation descriptors (2016-2017). She trains initial/in-service teachers on curriculum development, language evaluation and mediation. She contributed to the ECML project Encouraging the culture of evaluation among professionals (2008-2011) and *Pathways through assessing, learning and teaching in the CEFR* (Council of Europe 2011), *Mediación en el*

aprendizaje de lenguas. Estrategias y recursos (Anaya 2022), and Enriching 21st-century language education: The CEFR Companion volume in practice (Council of Europe 2022).

Ángel Díaz Cobo (BA English Philology, MD Teaching Spanish as a FL) An EEOOII teacher (1988-2023), Associate teacher of Spanish as a FL at Warsaw University and Cervantes Institute in Warsaw (2007-2010). He researched and published on Continuous Assessment at EEOOII and using CEFR-based rating scale assessment tools for Spanish CLIL courses (2008). He coordinated a European Language Label-awarded EOI teaching project (2014), developed the Andalusian EEOOII language curriculum, wrote EEOOII official certification exams and contributed to its rating scales design (2019-2023). He trains initial/in-service teachers on language evaluation, rating scale assessment and mediation.

María Deseada López Fernández (BA English Philology, Degree in Infant School Teaching, Degree in EFL Primary School Teaching) is an EEOOII teacher (2016-present). She is a lecturer and PhD Candidate at the Department of English, French, and German at the University of Málaga (2016-present) and a tutor for the National Distance Education University (UNED) (2010-present). She has participated in the development of the current curriculum for Andalusian EEOOII and writes official certification exams for EEOOII in Andalusia.

Antonio Romero Rodríguez (BA in English Philology) is an EEOOII and Secondary School teacher (1998-present). He is currently the coordinator of the EEOOII official certification exams (2016-present). He has also participated in the development of the curriculum for Andalusian EEOOII and in the creation of the exam rating scales (2019-2023). He trains initial/in-service teachers on language evaluation, rating scale assessment and mediation.

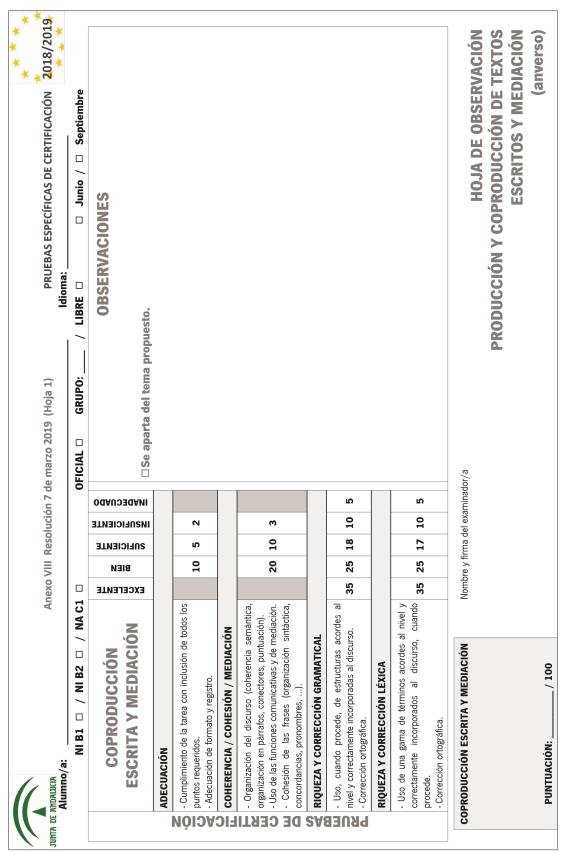
Appendices Appendix A

2018-2019 rating scale for written interaction and mediation (integrated; levels intermediate-B1, intermediate-B2 and advanced-C1).

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	TAREA 1	6,5	□ S£ AUSTA la tarea en gran medida □ SELCCIONA y TRANSMITE gran parte de la información relevante □ RUNCIONES en gran medida perthrentes □ LONGTUD del texto en gran medida apropiada	□ ORGANIZACIÓN de ideas en gran medida coherente (texto fácil de seguir la mayor parte del tempo) □ Convenciones FORVALES del texto seguidas en gran medida el Uso efraz en gran medida de MECANIS-MOS de COHESIÓN	□ REPERTORIO generalmente amplio de las estrategals lirgilistras de mediación pertirentes para la trace para la trace para la trace para medida de las estrategas lirgilistras de mediación pertirentes para la tarea	□ Variedad sufficiente de EST. GR. PROPAS para reformular el textor fuente de forma efzaz U variedad sufficiente de LÉXICO PROPIO para reformular el texto de forma efzaz □ Uso en gran medida correcto de EST. GR. RPOPIAS ajustadas al too de mediación que requiere la tarea □ Uso en gran medida correcto de LÉXICO RPOPIO ajustado al troo de mediación que requiere la tarea REGISTRO en gran medida adecuado a los requisitos de la tarea los requisitos de la tarea	
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AE:		\dashv	□ SE AUSTA a la tarea casi en su totalidad casi toda la información relevante □ FUNCIONES pertinentes casi en su totalidad □ LONGITUD del texto apropiada □ LONGITUD del texto apropiada	□ ORGANIZACIÓN de ideas casi del to- do coherente (texto muy fácil de seguir) □ Convenciones FORMALES del texto seguidas casi en su tratificad □ Uso sumamente efizaz de MECANIS. MOS de COHESIÓN	☐ Muy amplio REPERTORIO de las estrategas lingüístras de mediación pertirentes para la tarea ☐ USO muy efraz de las estrategias lingüístras de mediación pertirentes para la tarea	Muy amplia variedad de EST. GR PROPIAS que reformulan el texto fuente PROPIA que reformulan el texto fuente PROPIO que reformula el texto fuente □ Uso casi siempre correcto de EST. GR PROPIAS ajustadas al tipo de mediación que requiere la tarea □ Uso casi siempre correcto de LEXICO PROPIO ajustado al tipo de mediación que requiere la trae □ Uso casi siempre correcto de LEXICO PROPIO ajustado al tipo de mediación que requiere la trae □ Uso casi siempre correcto de LEXICO PROPIO ajustado al tipo de mediación que requiere la trae □ Us Casi siempre correcto de LEXICO PROPIO ajustado al tipo de mediación que requiere la trae □ REGISTRO muy adecuado a los requisitos de la traea	Ejemplos releva
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NC Junta de Andalucía		CRITERIO / NOTA ▶▶	CUMPLIMIENTO DE LA TAREA Ajuste al trarea. Selección y transmisión accuada de la ridra mación de baracos (s) Lamentels plea vonte para la tarea. Uso de las fundones del languaje pertinentes para la trarea. pertinentes para la trarea. Languad del texto (si se cumple la trarea)	ORGANIZACÍÓN DEL TEXTO. Organización de ideas (facilidad para seguir el texto). Convenciones formales del texto mediado. Mecanismos de conceidor. Mecanismos de codesión cuando se precisen.	ESTRATEGIAS DE MEDIACIÓN Vanedad y eficacia de estrate- gia(s) lingúistica(s) de mediación adecuada(s) que sean pertiren- te(s) para la tarea dada.	REFORMULACIÓN LINGÚSTICA Reformulación de estructuras gramaráciae del texto flente. Reformulación leixa del texto fuere. Corrección de estructuras gramarícies propias ajusticas gramarícies propias ajusticas of tipo de mediación que requiere la traca. Corrección de leixico propio ajustado al tipo de mediación que requiere la traca. Registro adecuado a la situación comunicativa.	

Appendix B

Rating scale for written mediation tasks 1 and 2. Initially used for intermediate-B1, intermediate-B2 and advanced-C1 levels in 2019-2020; then reused for all levels from basic-A2 to advanced-C2 in 2020-2021 and again in 2021-2022.



Appendix C

Description of linguistic mediation competence at Andalusian EEOOII in 2022-2023.

	Basic-A2	Intermediate-B1 and -B2	Advanced-C1 and -C2
Domain	Personal or public	B1 Personal or public B2 Personal, professional or academic	Personal, public, professional, or academic
Communicative situation	Familiar	Familiar or less familiar	Familiar, less familiar, even unfamiliar
Source text(s)	Very short, simple and clear Diagram or image	B1 Clear, well-structured B2 Complex, well- structured Written text or notes Infographic Town or weather map	Long, complex Diagrams or images with facts or arguments or hidden/sociocultural meanings Visual/Written joke Proverb/Quotation
Themes	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum
Selecting information from source text(s)	Limited choice of simple, predictable main points	Broader choice of relevant vs. irrelevant B1 information B2 detailed information or arguments	Total choice of very precise relevant information or significant ideas
CEFR/CV Mediation activities	Relaying very specific information	Relaying only relevant information Explaining visual data verbally	Relaying specific information Explaining visual data verbally Processing text Expressing a personal response to texts Interpreting text pragmatics
CEFR/CV Mediation strategies	Amplifying minimally	Adapting language Amplifying	Linking to previous knowledge Adapting language Breaking down complicated information Amplifying precisely Streamlining a text

Mediated text	Simple sentences	B1-Simple and compound sentences B2- Simple, compound and complex sentences Some explanation/ speculation B1- Reasoning from a personal perspective B2- Reasoning from a social perspective	B1-Clear, fluent, well-structured text C2-Clear, fluent, well-structured text with sensitivity to different viewpoints Ample reasoning and justification Interpreting nuances and undercurrents in the source text (e.g., hidden meanings, connotations and irony) from a sociocultural perspective
Written mediation task examples (integrated into written interaction)	Selecting and relaying specific information to watch a film/go to a restaurant	Selecting relevant information (specific or more general) to choose the most suitable holiday resort	Selecting relevant information to summarize/synthesize concrete instructions or to explain precise information
Oral mediation task examples	Describing a picture (spatial location of elements, describing people/objects, explaining the action in the picture)	B1-Giving specific instructions or information B2-Describing an image portraying a social situation	Describing, explaining and interpreting an image and its hidden/ implicit meanings or sociocultural relevance

Appendix D

2022-2023 rating scale for written mediation (independent; level C1/C2)

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COURSE		-	□ Task far from b	☐ SELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a very short part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ ORGANIZATION of the information almost entirely inappropriate (text difficult to follow)	□ Very limited range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Inadequate use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Inappropriate use of mediator's own GRANMAR STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	Oral and Written Mediation Task Final Mark	/ 80/1 PASS] E	
8		2.5				Z	 5 8		å	-	<u> </u>	
		•	☐ Task only partly ACHIEVED	☐ SELECTION, TRANSNISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a short part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ ORGANIZATION of the information partly appropriate (large parts of the text difficult to follow)	☐ Limited range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Generally inadequate use of inguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Generally inappropriate use of mediator's own GRAM/MAR STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	Written Mediation Task Final Mark	/ 20	Written Mediation Task Final Mark [both examiners]	/ 40
		Ľ)		c ≥	Pat N	u pat	<u>9</u>	tten M	I	tten M	
	ATION LEVELS C1 / C2		☐ Task adequately ACHIEVED	☐ SELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a large part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ ORGANIZATION of the information largely appropriate (text easy to follow most of the time)	☐ Adequate range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Largely effective use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task.	☐ Largely appropriate use of mediator's own GRAMMAR STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	Wri		Wri	
	AFD.	1	-	ر م		at _	at E	a a				
	WRITTEN MEDIATION	0		☐ SELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a very large part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ ORGANIZATION of the information very largely appropriate (text easy to follow)	☐ Fairly wide range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Very largely effective use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Very largely appropriate use of mediator's own GRAMIMAR STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience				
		٥	ר		ر م م			مل	NOTES			
NAME:		5	Task almost fully ACHIEVED	SELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of almost all the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ ORGANIZATION of the information almost entirely appropriate (text very easy to follow)	□ Wide range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Highly effective use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND, SYNTHESIZE and/or EXPANI information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Almost entirely appropriate use of mediator's own GRAMMAR STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	NC			
Ž		Σ										
1	Junta de Andalucia	A VOANA / PAIGE	TASK ACHIEVEMENT Adjustment to task instructions	SELECTION, TRANSINISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of relevant information from the source text(s)	Organization of the information (ease to follow the mediated text)	MEDIATION STRATEGIES Range and effectiveness of inguistic mediation strategies to SELECT (PSMD) /	STVI TREAKE and/or EAFLAIN information from the source text(s) and relevant to the task	Use of mediator's own GRANNHAR STRUCTURES and VOCABULARY to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience				

Appendix E

2022-2023 rating scale for oral mediation (independent; level C1/C2).

z	NAME:				COURSE
	ı	ORAL MEDIATION	ATION LEVELS C1 / C2		
Σ	10	8 6	6,5	5 4	2,5 1
TASK ACHIEVEMENT Adjustment to task instructions	☐ Task almost fully ACHIEVED	☐ Task very largely ACHIEVED	☐ Task adequately ACHIEVED	☐ Task only partly ACHIEVED	☐ Task far from being ACHIEVED
SELECTION, TRANSNISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ SELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of almost all the relevant information from the source text(s)	☐ SELECTION, TRANSNISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a very large part of the relevant information from the cource text(s)	☐ SELECTION, TRANSNISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a large part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	BELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a short part of the relevant information from the source text(s)	DELECTION, TRANSMISSION and/or INTERPRETATION of a very short part Of the relevant information from the source text(s)
Fluency and organization of the information (ease to follow the mediated text)	☐ FLUENCY and ORGANIZATION of the information almost entirely appropriate (text very easy to follow)	☐ FLUENCY and ORGANIZATION of the information very largely appropriate (text easy to follow)	☐ FLUENCY and ORGANIZATION of the information largely appropriate (text easy to follow most of the time)	TELUENCY and ORGANIZATION of the information partly appropriate (large parts of the text difficult to follow)	☐ FLUENCY and ORGANIZATION of the information almost entirely inappropriate (text difficult to follow)
MEDIATION STRATEGIES Range and effectiveness of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT / EXPAND and/or	☐ Wide range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Fairly wide range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Adequate range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Limited range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Very limited range of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPAIN information extracted from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task
1	☐ Highly effective use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	□ Very largely effective use of linguistic □ mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Largely effective use of linguistic mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Generally inadequate use of ☐ finguistic mediation strategies to ☐ SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPAND information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task	☐ Inadequate use of linguistic ☐ mediation strategies to SELECT, EXPAND and/or EXPLAIN information from the source text(s) that is relevant to the task
Use of mediator's own linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic COMINUNICATIVE RESOURCES to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	☐ Almost entirely appropriate use of mediator's own COMIMUNICATIVE RESOURCES to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	☐ Very largely appropriate use of mediator's own COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCES to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience	☐ Largely appropriate use of mediator's own COMIMUNICATIVE RESOURCES to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience		☐ Inappropriate use of mediator's own COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCES to make the message fully comprehensible by the target audience
	NOTES		Ĭ	Oral Mediation Task Final Mark	Oral and Written Mediation Task Final Mark
			Ö	Oral Mediation Task Final Mark (both examiners)	/80 / 10 PASS FAIL Examiner's Name and Signature
				/ 40	