

1 The potential of the CEFR for languages descriptors for mediation in an ESP CALL-based context

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Abstract

The present case study investigated the potential of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages: learning, teaching, assessment can-do descriptors for mediation in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)-based context. Fabricating descriptors for mediation was cardinal for the Council of Europe's (2018) endeavour in updating the CEFR Companion. Despite surfacing just as a language skill in the 2001 CEFR Companion, mediation is now viewed as a central mode of communication in the New CEFR Companion, both in the receptive and productive modes. As they were just introduced in 2018, the CEFR mediation descriptor scales have not yet been sufficiently explored. The main goal of the present research was to fill some of this gap in the literature by investigating the potential of the CEFR for languages descriptors for mediation in an ESP CALL-based CEFR B2 tertiary level context (a 13 week ESP course specifically designed to meet the needs of university Rehabilitation Sciences students.) Data collection tools included students' self-assessment against can-do descriptors for mediation, observation, student reflections, and focus group interviews. The findings suggest that the implementation of the existing course activities had the potential to promote mediation processes. The significant role of mediation in carrying out the course

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activities in addition to the CALL component of the ESP course activities highlighted the potential of CALL technologies to trigger, support, and promote mediation processes; this finding stressed the underlying role of the nature and the structure of the ESP course's CALL-Based activities in supporting mediation processes.

Keywords: common European framework of reference, mediation descriptors, English for specific purposes, computer-assisted language learning.

1. Introduction

The present case study focuses on the potential of the CEFR for languages: learning, teaching, assessment can-do descriptors for mediation in an ESP CALL-based context. The fabrication and validation of the descriptors for mediation originated from the Council of Europe's painstaking work on language learning, assessment, and teaching. While it was originally treated as a language skill in the 2001 CEFR Companion, mediation is reinterpreted and viewed as one of the basic ingredients in communication in the New CEFR Companion. The emergence of mediation as a language skill in the 2001 CEFR Companion was perhaps the preamble to the reinterpretation of mediation in the New CEFR Companion.

In the updated New CEFR Companion, mediation is treated as a fundamental mode of communication; not only the significance of the co-construction of meaning but also “the constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 9) led to the development of descriptor scales for mediation from scratch. As they were just introduced in 2018, the CEFR mediation descriptor scales were still underexplored at the moment this research was conducted. The present research aspired to fill some of this gap in the literature by providing insights regarding the potential of the CEFR descriptors for mediation, not just in a general English learning context but in an ESP CALL-based context.

2. Literature review

Commencing with an overview of the CEFR, its definition and background, this chapter describes and discusses the CEFR descriptive scheme as well as the theoretical components of the present inquiry.

2.1. The CEFR: definition and background

The CEFR is a ground-breaking product of the Council of Europe's work on language teaching and learning. It was originated in the 1970s by the "need for a common framework for language learning which would "facilitate cooperation among educational institutions in different countries", particularly within Europe (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5). It was officially published in 2001 and it is available in 40 languages.

The CEFR presents a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency and a set of common reference levels (A1-C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales. Investing in socio-cultural and social constructivist approaches, the CEFR envisions and builds upon the idea of learners as social agents who co-construct meaning in interaction and by the notions of mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competences (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 24). As an advocate of social constructivism, the CEFR assumes an action-oriented approach; it proposes real-life tasks for the learners, which involve the use of language as a vehicle to accomplish the tasks of different natures at an individual, as well as at a peer/group, level.

2.2. The CEFR descriptive scheme

The CEFR descriptive scheme is "not in [itself] offered as standard" but it is "intended to provide a common metalanguage to facilitate networking and the development of communities of practice by groups of teachers" (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 41-42). It can be used as a point of reference to analyse L2 learners' needs, identify their learning goals, and drive the development of L2 curriculum (Little, 2006).

The CEFR framework of levels describes language proficiency and is part of the Council of Europe's endeavour to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism among the countries of Europe (Council of Europe, 2018). The framework of levels is divided into three parts: the *global stage (A1-C2)*; the *CEFR self-assessment grid*, which is presented in the form of checklists; and the *illustrative descriptor scales for the activities*.

The CEFR levels organise 'can-do' statements, the formation of which was inspired by the field of professional training for nurses (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 32). The can-do statements are concerned with the learner's communicative language competences and the strategies that are intertwined with these competences, as well as communicative activities. Communicative language activities revolve around reception, production, interaction, and mediation. Likewise, there are scales for listening and reading, speaking, and writing.

2.3. Implementation of the CEFR in language learning

Working with the CEFR in language learning settings has received the interest of a plethora of researchers and in-service practitioners (Alderson et al., 2006; Glover, 2011; Goodier, 2014; Harsch & Rupp, 2011; Lowie, Haines, & Jansma, 2010; Weir, 2005). The following are some examples of research in different areas.

Harsch and Rupp's (2011) study uses the CEFR as a basis to design level-specific writing tasks. Adopting a descriptive statistics analysis combined with generalisability and multifaceted Rasch modelling, Harsch and Rupp (2011) conclude that the level-specific writing tasks "yield plausible inferences about task difficulty, rater harshness, rating criteria difficulty, and student distribution" (p. 28); as a result they can be aligned to their targeted CEFR levels.

In a similar fashion, Glover (2011) adopts a mixed methods approach to examine the potential of the CEFR level descriptors in raising university students' awareness of their speaking skills; throughout the study, positive findings were

reported such as the potential of the CEFR descriptors for self-assessment to promote active involvement in learning and reflection, “resulting in greater self-awareness and a more realistic view of the learners’ own abilities” (p. 130).

Weir (2005) views can-do statements from the assessment and testing perspective; while he highlights the potential of the can-do statements, Weir (2005) also points out their major limitation; as Weir (2005) posits, “the can-do statements can be successfully performed at each level of proficiency even if their wording is not consistent or not transparent enough in places for the development of tests” (p. 282). The density of the CEFR descriptors is discussed by Goodier (2014) too; he views it as one of the CEFR weakest points. In *Working with the CEFR can-do statements*, Goodier (2014) reveals the difficulty of the participants in his study to understand the CEFR descriptors, as they thought they were “dense and wordy” (p. 26).

Focusing on the assessment of writing tasks, Lowie et al. (2010) have conducted a case study of embedding a standardisation procedure within the CEFR framework at the University of Groningen; throughout their study, positive results were reported highlighting the value of standardisation procedures within the CEFR. Along the same lines, Alderson et al. (2006) view the CEFR in relation to the analysis of tests of reading and listening through the experience of the Dutch CEFR Construct project. The method used in the project was “iterative and inductive” (Alderson et al., 2006, p. 7). Based on their findings, Alderson et al. (2006) conclude that, despite being promising as an instrument for developing tests, the CEFR needed “additional specifications to be developed before [it] could be used as the basis for test development” (p. 6).

Identifying reported problems can lead to the revision and amendment of the CEFR by the stakeholders (Trim, 2012). This is precisely exemplified through the publication of the 2018 *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors*. In the 2018 CEFR Companion, readers are introduced to the illustrative descriptors for mediation alongside with the notions of plurilingual and pluricultural competences. Descriptor scales are also provided for sign languages and young language learners.

The present research sought to unravel the potential of the can-do statements for mediation in an ESP CALL-based university classroom.

2.4. Mediation

The concept of mediation is echoed in [Vygotzky's \(1934\)](#) theory of constructivism. It involves “the use of culturally-derived psychological tools in transforming the relations between psychological inputs and outputs” ([Vygotzky, 1934](#), p. 3). [Vygotzky's \(1934\)](#) theory of constructivism embraces the idea that humans do not act directly in the world but rather the use of mediation aids in altering their understanding through interacting with others and their environment. Mediation can also involve the use of symbolic tools within a socially organised activity. Language can function as a symbolic tool used by humans to mediate their relationship to their environment and to others. [Vygotzky \(1934\)](#) coined the term Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is founded upon the co-construction of meaning and could be defined as the rupture between someone's actual competence and their individual prospective development level.

2.5. The CEFR and mediation

Espousing the premises of [Vygotzky \(1934\)](#), the CEFR builds upon the concept of mediation. While it has initially surfaced in the CEFR since 2001 ([Council of Europe, 2001](#)), mediation has tended to be reduced to interpretation and translation ([Council of Europe, 2001](#)). In the CEFR New Companion, ‘mediation’ is an all embracing nomadic notion ([Lenoir, 1996](#)) since it is one of the basic ingredients in communication, both in the receptive and productive modes.

Mediation lies at the heart of the CEFR's aforementioned vision; hence the concept is viewed from different angles in the New CEFR Companion. Commencing with the classification of mediation into four fundamental types being linguistic, cultural, social, and pedagogic ([Council of Europe, 2018](#)), mediation is further categorised in two forms that are essentially employed with the use of language: cognitive mediation and relational mediation. Cognitive

mediation can be defined as the facilitation of access to knowledge in cases where a person cannot access it by himself/herself, whereas relational mediation can be thought of as the effective management of interpersonal relations, which aims in the creation of collaborative environments. Based on the two aforementioned forms of mediation, the authors of the CEFR split mediation into four subgroups (see figure in [Council of Europe, 2018](#), p. 104).

2.6. ESP

ESP is defined as a “discipline that attempts to meet the needs of a specific population of students, employs methodologies and materials from the discipline it is centred on, and focuses on the discourse related to it” ([Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998](#), p. 5). ESP can be linked with special academic and professional areas that take an approach to language teaching which has as a main purpose, that purpose is to fulfil the specific needs of the learners engaged with it. Curriculum design and syllabus construction should be relevant to the needs of the ESP students. Instead of ‘one fits all’ approach, demarcating genre analysis is central to ESP. Needs analysis is equally important to ESP courses; [Athanasidou et al. \(2016\)](#), postulate that “needs analysis refers to the process through which the language and skills that the learners need are identified” (p. 300). By the same token, being exposed to authentic material is beneficial for the ESP students as it prepares them for different target situations.

2.7. CALL

CALL debuted in early 1960 and it refers to “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” ([Levy & Stockwell, 1997](#), p. 1). CALL can inform any language learning context as it is “very flexible and can adapt to the facilitator’s teaching philosophy and learning objectives” ([Ducate & Arnold, 2011](#), p. 9); in the present case study, the existing ESP course was framed within the CALL field.

With the proliferation of technologies that support language learning such as Web 2.0 tools and virtual learning environments, as well as the different

approaches to teaching and learning, the 21st century CALL is at the service of the urge to prepare learners who will not only be competent language learners but also competent digital natives. In a CALL context, integrating pedagogically driven technologies is a cardinal principle. The use of authentic materials and the provision of real-world problems are also CALL components; dealing with real-world problems in a meaningful way encourages students to become active learners and critically engage with information using technology as the vehicle for constructing their learning. In light of the aforementioned, it is reasonable to argue that mediation is at the core of CALL; in a CALL context, technology precisely mediates language learning and use as, not only learners become users of the language, but also technology becomes the mediator of the learners' language use (Stanford University, 2020).

2.8. CEFR, ESP, and CALL

Within the ESP research agenda, only a limited amount of studies deals with the CEFR and ESP. Mestre and Pastor (2013), for example, adopt a mixed methods approach to explore the pragmatic considerations of the CEFR within an ESP context; Mestre and Pastor (2013) report positive results “as students acquired information about pragmatic aspects of language” (p. 229). A quite different approach is taken by Athanasiou et al. (2016); using focus groups, Athanasiou et al. (2016) discuss the process of alignment of ESP courses with the CEFR in the Cyprus University of Technology. According to Athanasiou et al. (2016), while the ESP syllabus requires expertise in terms of the discourse related to each course, the selection of material is a painstaking process which is further aggravated with its alignment with a specific language level. In a similar fashion, Grytsyk (2016) explores the positive outcomes of the CEFR in the ESP curriculum in Ukrainian higher educational institutions, obtaining favourable results; as she states, “[t]he implementation of International English Tests into the process of teaching ESP in accordance with CEFR will undoubtedly lead to positive changes and transformations of the foreign language education” (Grytsyk, 2016, p. 8). Buyukkalay (2017) approaches the CEFR from a different angle in her study; the author examines the effect of CEFR-based ESP speaking and listening activities on the success of students

in the Faculty of Tourism, reporting an increase in the achievement levels of the students in the aforementioned skills.

2.9. Literature review conclusive remarks

Despite the published research findings in relation to the CEFR and ESP, however, so far little is known about the descriptors for mediation in language learning contexts, let alone in ESP CALL-based language learning contexts. A notable effort to deal with mediation in language teaching is made by Chovancová (2018) who draws attention to the centrality of mediation in the context of English for Legal Purposes (ELP) and ESP; in her article *Practicing the skill of mediation in English for legal purposes*, the researcher discusses the potential of mediation for effective teaching of ESP focusing on ELP. Chovancová (2018) primarily designs sample activities to gain an understanding regarding the application of mediation in the context of legal practice and the English for law syllabus. She then suggests ways in which students can practise the skill of mediation. Regardless of the fertile ground for practising the skill of mediation in an ESP/ELP classroom provided by Chovancová's (2018) research, actual implementation of the aforementioned in ESP contexts, as well as in ESP CALL-based contexts, needs to be staged too. In this way, the CEFR stakeholders can be further illuminated regarding the harmonisation of the theoretical part of mediation developed in the companion, and the practical one in language learning contexts.

3. Method

In the field of applied linguistics, there is a plethora of research approaches and research designs. Scholars opt for the one that best serves their research. The nature of the present inquiry fulfilled the premises of a case study research design and mixed research method. The present study was an empirical inquiry that investigated the recent contemporary phenomenon of the CEFR Descriptors for mediation in depth and within a real-world context (Yin, 2014, p. 4), that of an ESP CALL-based language learning. Exploring the potential of the descriptors

for mediation in this specific context provided valuable insights regarding their utility not in general English language learning context, but in a specific one. More strikingly, by carrying out the study within not just an ESP context but rather within an ESP CALL-based context, amplified the significance of the present inquiry as it also helped to gain insights into the potential of technology in triggering, supporting, or promoting mediation processes. A mixed research method was employed. Data were collected using observation, learner self-assessment against can-do statements for mediation, learner reflections, and focus group interviews. It addressed the following questions.

- How is mediation present in the existing ESP curriculum of this case study?
- How do the ESP CALL-based course activities of this case study support mediation?

3.1. ESP CALL-based context and participants

The study was conducted in an ESP CALL-based CEFR B2 level language classroom at a tertiary level context. The course lasted for 13 weeks. Students attended the course twice a week in two one and a half hour-long sessions. The course was specifically designed to meet the needs of university Rehabilitation Sciences. Through the course, students were afforded the opportunity to develop language competencies in English that would allow them to attain their professional goals as qualified speech therapists. The course was also framed within the CALL field; hence students performed independent or collaborative task-based activities (in fixed groups of three or four) using technology; they actively participated in interactive lectures and activities; and they developed their skills in all areas of language learning through the use of authentic material and content related to the genres and topics of the field of Rehabilitation Sciences, revolving around four main thematic areas:

- clinical aspects in the autism spectrum disorders (Thematic area/Block 4);

- the elderly and rehabilitation, hearing rehabilitation, stroke rehabilitation (Thematic area/Block 5);
- an introduction to the principles of rehabilitation based on the international classification of functioning, disability, and health framework; and
- head injury rehabilitation, spinal injury rehabilitation.

This compulsory course was offered by the University Language Centre to first-year Rehabilitation Sciences students. Twelve first-year Greek Cypriot university participants enrolled in this English for specific academic purposes course of the language centre were recruited for volunteer participation in the case study.

3.2. Process

The research adopted a design plan for organising the stages of carrying out the study and thus ensuring the smooth transition from one stage to another.

The first stage of the implementation plan dealt with the adaptation by the researcher of the CEFR generic descriptors for mediation to the two existing ESP thematic blocks within the study's timeframe. This included the adaptation of the descriptors to the ESP course activities: oral discussion of lectures, note taking, summary writing of lectures, interview preparation and conduct of the interview, critical thinking, critical analysis, and collaborative writing of an article.

The second stage revolved around obtaining consent, familiarising students with the CEFR and the CEFR framework for mediation, and administering to students the adapted CEFR descriptors to the first ESP block.

The third stage was dedicated to observing the implementation of Block 4's course activities, re-administrating the adapted CEFR descriptors for mediation to ESP Block 4, providing participants with the template for reflections on

Block 4, and administering to students the adapted CEFR descriptors for mediation to ESP Block 5.

Likewise, the fourth stage was devoted to observing the implementation of Block 5's course activities, re-administrating the adapted CEFR descriptors for mediation to ESP Block 5, and providing participants with the template for reflections on Block 5.

The fifth stage focused on focus group interviews for exploring the participants' perceptions of the nature and implementation of the descriptors for mediation through their course activities.

The final stage of carrying out the project dealt with data analysis, discussion of findings, and conclusions.

3.3. Research design, method, and data collection tools

The present research study made use of both qualitative and quantitative evidence, in other words, it followed the quantitative/qualitative mixed methods research process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative data were collected from the administration of the CEFR self-assessment can-do statements for mediation before and after the implementation of the existing ESP course activities. Qualitative data were collected from the researcher's observations and the focus group's interviews. Qualitative data were also collected from the students' reflections for further validation of the results.

Each of the thematic blocks' tasks was classified under the appropriate mediation descriptor and a total of 61 items were created. The adapted CEFR table was administered to the students both before and after the implementation of the existing ESP course activities. Participants were asked to indicate on the adapted CEFR descriptor scales for mediation what they can-do with language in processes that entailed mediation; in particular, they were asked to rate their ability to execute the tasks described in each statement on a scale ranging from A1 to B2.

Observation. Using the adapted CEFR descriptor scales for mediation as an observational protocol, the researchers collected data by making a field visit to the case study site, which was the ESP language classroom. The observations involved participants' behaviours and interactions in relation to their course activities and the descriptors for mediation during course sessions of two thematic blocks.

Student reflections. Aided by a set of guiding questions formulated by the researchers, students were invited by the end of each thematic block to reflect on their learning in relation to the mediation processes involved.

Focus groups. Focus group interviewing was also used for exploring the participants' perceptions of the nature and implementation of the descriptors for mediation through their course activities. The focus group interview was conducted in the participants' L1 and it was implemented in two identical group sessions, whereby the participants were split into two groups and they responded to identical questions.

4. Results and discussion

The main goal of the present research was to fill some of the gap in the literature regarding the potential of the CEFR mediation descriptor scales in an ESP (Rehabilitation Sciences) CALL-based CEFR B2 tertiary level context. The results and their discussion are presented below by answering the research questions:

4.1. Question 1: how is mediation present in the existing ESP curriculum of this case study?

Primarily, the adaptation of the CEFR descriptors for mediation to the existing ESP curriculum revealed high prevalence of mediation in the ESP curriculum despite the designers' unawareness of the CEFR framework for mediation before

this study. Investing in observations, the researchers confirmed that mediation was indeed systematically present in the implemented ESP curriculum, although the curriculum designers did not originally take it into consideration as their course was developed just before the CEFR descriptors for mediation were published in 2018.

The presence of mediation in the course activities was reflected in both the structure and the content of the course in a systematic way. Not only could students mediate to themselves through reading and responding critically to texts, but they could also use technologies to work collaboratively on authentic tasks related to their field of study. The tasks were arranged according to the degree of the difficulty needed for their accomplishment; note taking, oral discussion, summary writing, interview preparation, conduct of the interview, critical analysis. By the same token, the authentic nature of the topics related to the participants' field of study, as well as the use of CALL technologies in performing the tasks, encouraged mediation processes in a meaningful way. More strikingly, the instructor's guidance and support to the performance of the tasks included mediation processes, such as the simplification of her language to explain concepts regarding the course content.

The identification of the high prevalence of mediation in the ESP curriculum was directly linked to the second research question which referred to how the ESP course activities of this case study supported mediation.

4.2. Question 2: how do the ESP CALL-based course activities of this case study support mediation?

By employing the concurrent embedded strategy, we were able to explore the potential of the ESP course activities to support mediation, both in general and in particular. Through the primary method we quantitatively explored the potential of the ESP course activities in enhancing the skill of mediation. Through the secondary method we identified which activities were more conducive to mediation processes and what the specific mediation processes entailed in performing them were.

Table 1. Results of participants' self-assessment against can-do statements for mediation before the implementation of the CEFR descriptors for mediation

BEFORE					
B1		A2		A1	
Mean	2.409836066	Mean	7.06557377	Mean	2.557377049
Standard Error	0.208267704	Standard Error	0.348195075	Standard Error	0.311461029
Median	2	Median	7	Median	2
Mode	2	Mode	6	Mode	0
Standard Deviation	1.626622771	Standard Deviation	2.71949047	Standard Deviation	2.432588403
Sample Variance	2.645901639	Sample Variance	7.395628415	Sample Variance	5.917486339
Kurtosis	0.178994903	Kurtosis	-0.851587225	Kurtosis	-1.021219129
Skewness	0.526938003	Skewness	-0.163908437	Skewness	0.524016906
Range	7	Range	11	Range	8
Minimum	0	Minimum	1	Minimum	0
Maximum	7	Maximum	12	Maximum	8
Sum	147	Sum	431	Sum	156
Count	61	Count	61	Count	61

Table 2. Results of participants' self-assessment against can-do statements for mediation after the implementation of the CEFR descriptors for mediation

AFTER					
B1		A2		A1	
Mean	5.06557377	Mean	6.147540984	Mean	0.786885246
Standard Error	0.177826668	Standard Error	0.185301505	Standard Error	0.090881398
Median	5	Median	6	Median	1
Mode	5	Mode	6	Mode	1
Standard Deviation	1.388870674	Standard Deviation	1.447251021	Standard Deviation	0.709806408
Sample Variance	1.928961749	Sample Variance	2.094535519	Sample Variance	0.503825137
Kurtosis	0.190633255	Kurtosis	-0.263933396	Kurtosis	-0.940383748
Skewness	0.612414235	Skewness	-0.36847889	Skewness	0.333315645

Range	6	Range	6	Range	2
Minimum	3	Minimum	3	Minimum	0
Maximum	9	Maximum	9	Maximum	2
Sum	309	Sum	375	Sum	48
Count	61	Count	61	Count	61

Data analysis of students’ self-assessment against the can-do statements for mediation included descriptive statistics analysis to quantitatively describe the collection of information regarding students’ self-assessment before and after the implementation of the existing ESP course activities. Results of students’ self-assessment against the adapted CEFR can-do statements for mediation to the two existing ESP thematic blocks’ activities before and after the implementation of the existing ESP course activities are presented in [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) above.

Overall, quantitative data analysis of the 61 CEFR can-do statements for self-assessment revealed development of students’ skills for mediation after the implementation of the ESP CALL-based course activities, including mediation. While the mean value of the A2 and A1 proficiency levels, for example, decreased after the implementation of the ESP course activities, the mean value of the B1 proficiency level increased. By the same token, the total number of A2 statements was declined after the implementation of the existing ESP course activities (from 431 to 375), indicating that a number of students rated themselves as B1; in addition to the aforementioned, the dramatic decline of A1 statements limits the possibility of students self-assessment as A1. This is supported by the subtraction of the total number of A2 statements noted within the two phases of the administration of the adapted can-do descriptors for mediation, which is bigger than the total number of A1 statements. These findings had positive implications in that they suggested the potential of the ESP course activities in enhancing the skill of mediation; in performing and accomplishing the ESP course tasks, students considered that they could develop their communicative skills regarding the mode of mediation.

Qualitative data analysis from observation, student reflections, and focus group interview confirmed that the course activities were valuable from the angle of

mediation. The data revealed that mediation processes were greatly employed in the course activities; however, mediation seemed to be more conspicuously employed in the course writing activities and the collaborative oral discussions rather than the oral classroom discussions. Data analysis also revealed the significance of the CALL component of the ESP course activities from the angle of mediation as the technologies used by the students for performing their tasks were demonstrated to spark, support, and promote mediation practices too.

Mediation processes were thoroughly manifested in note taking, summary writing, preparation for questions and answers for an interview, and critical analysis for an article. Note taking was an individual task and it was mostly used by the students as a method for drawing attention to the main points of the lecture; organising their notes in bullet points according to the subtitles of their lectures and then expanding on them by including examples entails a form of mediation as students related in writing specific information contained in their lectures, and they made sense of it by structuring their notes in a clear way (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 108, 115). The use of Google Docs for note taking enabled students' exchange of their notes with their peers and it facilitated the process of the collaborative tasks: lectures' summaries, questions and answers for an interview, and critical analysis of an article. While one of the students stated that "[n]ote-taking helped me to understand the lecture and it provided the basis for composing the summary", another student maintained: "I consider that note taking aided me in understanding the content of the lecture and it helped me to pay attention to the speaker's details which were the main points".

Notably, in collaborative writing activities, there was a distribution of the tasks to be performed by each group member with specific people assuming the role of leaders and the rest of the group members taking on an assisting and supporting role. Participants acting as leaders (CEFR: mediating concepts/leading group work) not only led group work but they also encouraged their peers' contribution to the task (CEFR: mediating concepts/encouraging conceptual talk). As a result, they facilitated communication within their group; while they opened the group discussion on the tasks by proposing their arguments, they provided explanations to their peers regarding the content and the nature

of the task. In providing explanations to their peers, the participants/leaders were sometimes observed to switch to their classmates' mother tongue so as to help them to capture complex vocabulary such as 'rehabilitation' and 'face transplants'. The participants/leaders' scaffolding practices towards their peers emphasised mediation strategies surfacing in collaborative tasks; breaking down complicated information contained in the written or spoken texts from the lecture and the articles, or adapting language to explain to their peers, are classified under *Mediation strategies* in the CEFR framework for mediation (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 104). Eventually, aided by the participants/leaders, the rest of the group members made their contributions to the summary composition, the preparation of the interview questions and answers, and the critical analysis tasks; the participants/assistants' contributions included simple remarks regarding the content of the tasks as well as the selection of the vocabulary to be included in crafting the written documents. Students themselves acknowledged the importance of collaboration in accomplishing the tasks as exemplified through their assertive tone and their perception of it in the following statements.

“Collaborative work is better than individual work because in this way there are different viewpoints and you can learn from each other” (P2).

“In collaborative tasks, one complements the other and this is useful as it allows for accomplishing the task more successfully” (P10).

“If a person didn't understand something the rest of the group members can help him/her and then s/he can contribute to the task” (P5).

Mediation practices were likewise fairly exploited through the oral discussion; mediation practices from the oral discussion mostly revolved around clarification requests regarding the content and the relevant terminology of the lecture or the guidelines for performing a task. This is exemplified through the following interactions:

“Can you please explain to me the definition of diagnosis?” (P8).

“Does anyone know what a diagnosis is?” (Instructor)

“Diagnosis is to come to a conclusion of what the problem is” (P6).

“Do we have to be neutral in descriptive writing and negative or positive in critical writing?” (P5).

“Critical writing entails providing arguments and then distancing oneself from them to criticise them by using evidence from reliable sources” (Instructor).

Not only through the above and similar interactions did students employ mediation processes, but they also noted in their self-reports that the oral discussion of the lecture was helpful as it allowed them to clarify their thoughts and it facilitated their understanding of the lecture content.

By contrast, the participants did not systematically express their personal responses to the oral discussions carried out in the classroom, although they were encouraged by their instructor to engage with them. The pattern of low participation in terms of expressing a personal response to the oral discussions, nevertheless, could be linked to personality traits or to the lack of insufficient prior practice in the oral discussion, rather than implying the absence of mediation practices.

Having direct access to CALL technologies for performing the existing ESP course tasks enhanced students' mediation practices. Watching preselected instructional YouTube videos contributed to students' understanding of the course topics and the preliminary processes in performing them. For example, once students watched the YouTube video about 'strokes', they seemed to gain a better understanding of the task to be performed – the preparation of questions and answers for an interview. Upon watching the video, students were illuminated about the aforementioned topic as well as about the kind of questions and answers that describe an interview, and eventually they worked on their assigned topic accordingly (Autism/SLI/ADD/ADHD/Genetic Syndromes).

Moreover, the projection of the presentation on the classroom board aided students in presenting their ideas to the rest of the groups and also scaffolded them in understanding the components of the topic addressed. Likewise, the use of Google Docs for the writing tasks was demonstrated as a valuable venue to construct knowledge; through the simultaneous input of information and the alterations and additions of each other's written productions, students could not only collaborate with each other but they could also negotiate for meaning and consolidate their knowledge.

4.3. Limitations

One may argue that the results of a case study do not allow for generalisation. However, the aim of a case study is not generalisation, it is the in-depth examination of a case. In this case, it is the in-depth inquiry of the integration of the CEFR descriptors for mediation, not in general, but in the specific case of ESP CALL-based context. The focus was to shed light on the details of this integration and aid in the understanding of the underlying reasons that establish them as favourable beyond the site of the specific context.

5. Conclusions

The in-depth analysis of the introduction of the CEFR can-do descriptors for mediation in the ESP context revealed issues that have not yet been exposed in prior research, and provided important implications for practice. The case study revealed that not only was mediation systematically present in the existing ESP curriculum, but also that the implementation of the existing ESP course activities had the potential to promote mediation processes. The significant role of mediation in carrying out the course activities, in addition to the CALL component of the ESP CALL-based course activities, highlighted the potential of CALL technologies in triggering, supporting, and promoting mediation processes; this finding places emphasis on the underlying role of the nature and the structure of the ESP course activities in supporting mediation processes.

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