

Understanding Mediation

1. Introduction

In recent years, mediation has become one of the key concepts in language teaching. It appears in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, and Companion Volume 2020) and in the EOI Curriculum (Decret 34/2019, Illes Balears), both of which guide language education in Europe.

While “mediation” may sound abstract, it simply refers to the ability to help others understand, communicate, or learn through language. In everyday life, we mediate constantly - when we summarise an article for a friend, explain instructions, clarify a misunderstanding, and so on.

2. Mediation

Both the CEFR and the EOI Curriculum understand mediation as part of communicative language competence, by focusing on how learners use language to make meaning accessible to others.

Mediation involves not only linguistic knowledge but also social and cognitive skills: empathy, flexibility, cultural awareness, and the ability to reformulate meaning.

At lower levels, mediation may mean sharing simple information or giving short explanations. At higher levels, it can include interpreting complex texts, or helping others understand sensitive issues. In every case, the focus is not on reproducing information exactly, but on making communication work effectively for others.

3. Mediation Strategies

When people mediate, they draw on a wide range of strategies — cognitive, linguistic, and social. In EOI certification exams, as in real-life situations, there is not a single “correct” way to mediate. The appropriate strategies depend on what the task asks for and on the communicative context, so candidates need to interpret the situation and act accordingly.

Below are some of the most common types of mediation strategies, among others:

Linking to prior knowledge: connecting new ideas with what learners or interlocutors already know.

Simplifying or paraphrasing: reformulating information in clearer, more accessible language.

Summarising and highlighting key points: extracting essential meaning from a text.

Adapting language to audience: choosing the right tone, level of formality, and vocabulary for the listener or reader.

Clarifying and checking understanding: asking questions, rephrasing, or confirming that meaning has been understood.

Encouraging participation: inviting others to share ideas, opinions, or experiences to build collective understanding.

Facilitating intercultural understanding: explaining cultural references or mediating between different perspectives.

4. Final Note

Mediation values not only what learners know about a language, but what they can do with it to help others understand, learn, and communicate.

In the current context of the EOI of the Balearic Islands, final certification exams currently include the assessment of written mediation tasks, until new official assessment guidelines are issued.

These tasks assess the candidate's ability to apply strategies that are appropriate to the task's purpose, audience, and communicative situation.