

Building Bridges: Experiencing Mediation in ESAP



Julio Gimenez,
University of Westminster

Map

- **Mediation in CEFR, plurilingual learning contexts and ESAP;**
- **Mediation strategies in ESAP course design:** Linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary mediation;
- **Challenges and opportunities for ESAP practitioners.**

I. CEFR, ESAP and plurilingual learning contexts

CERF and Mediation

Mediation has become central to contemporary communication given the “increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of our societies” (CEFR Companion Volume, 2018, p. 22)

The ability to “mediate between individuals with no common language (or dialect, or variety), even with only a slight knowledge oneself” (p. 28)

Mediation in CEFR descriptive scheme

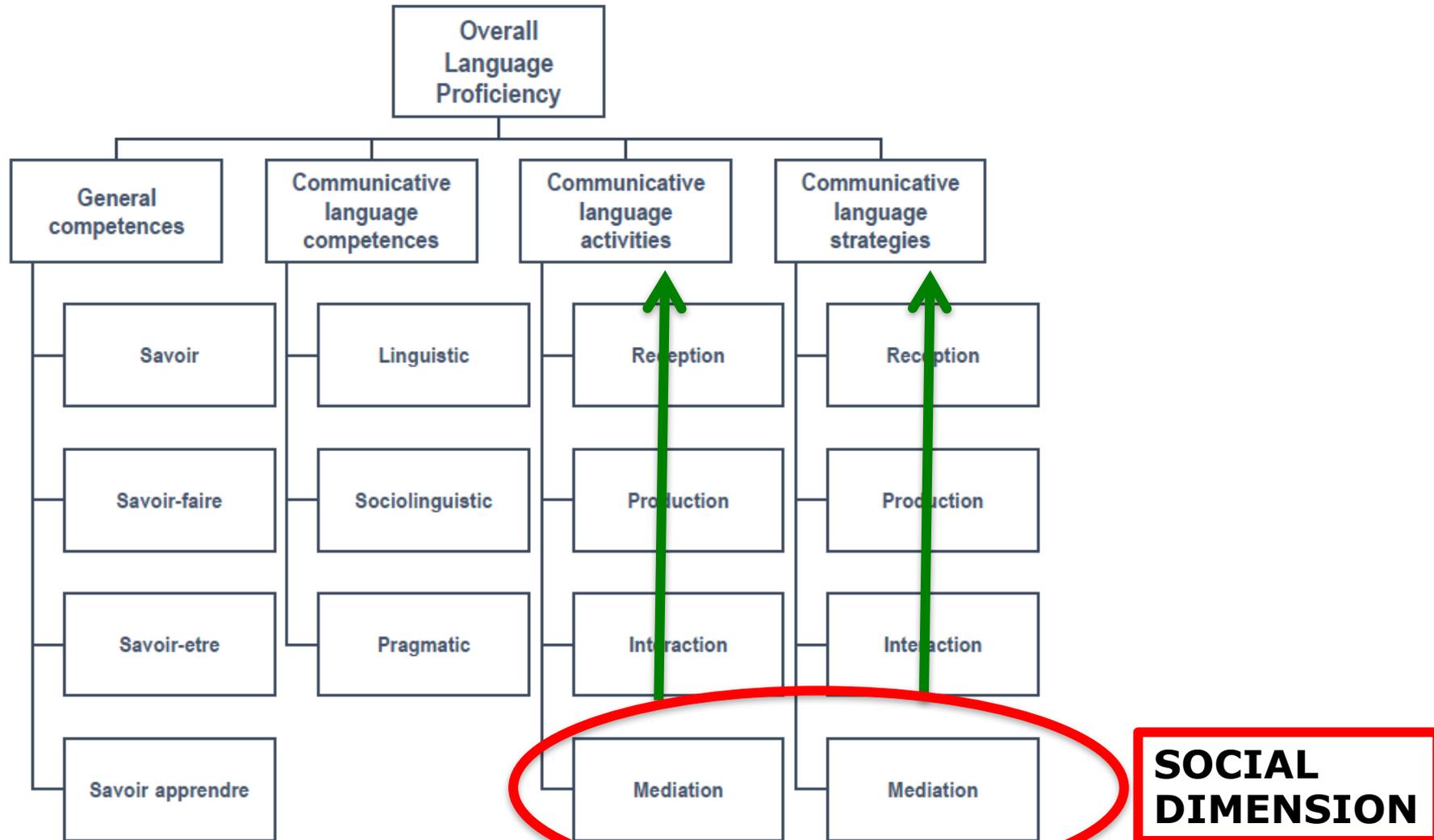


Figure 1 – The structure of the CEFR descriptive scheme³

CERF and Mediation

But...

Early descriptions placed too much emphasis on 'cross-linguistic' mediation.

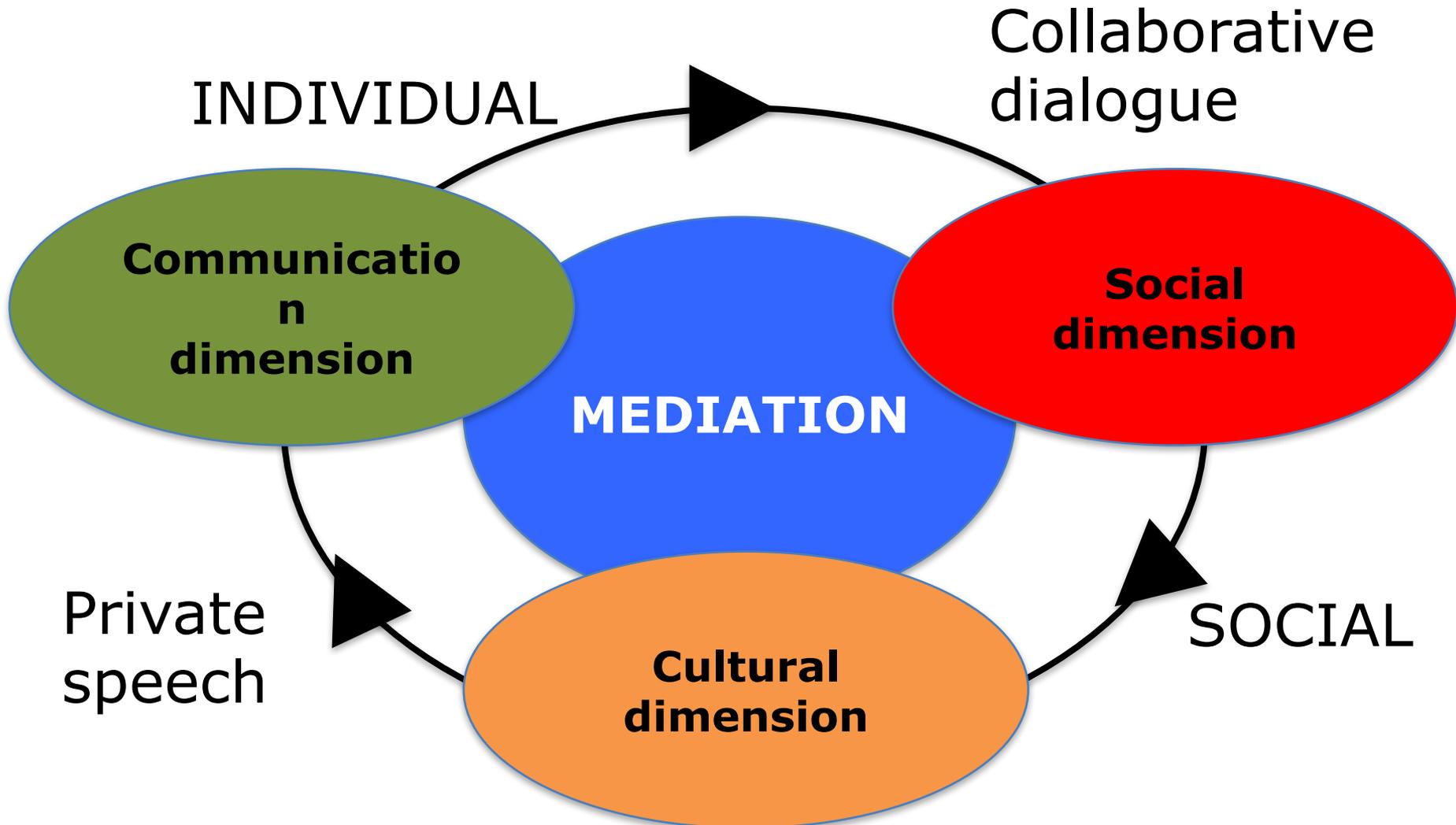


"mediation as linguistic bridging", sometimes almost exclusively interpreted as 'translation and interpretation' of written and spoken texts



Mediation in CEFR

The 2014-17 expansion project



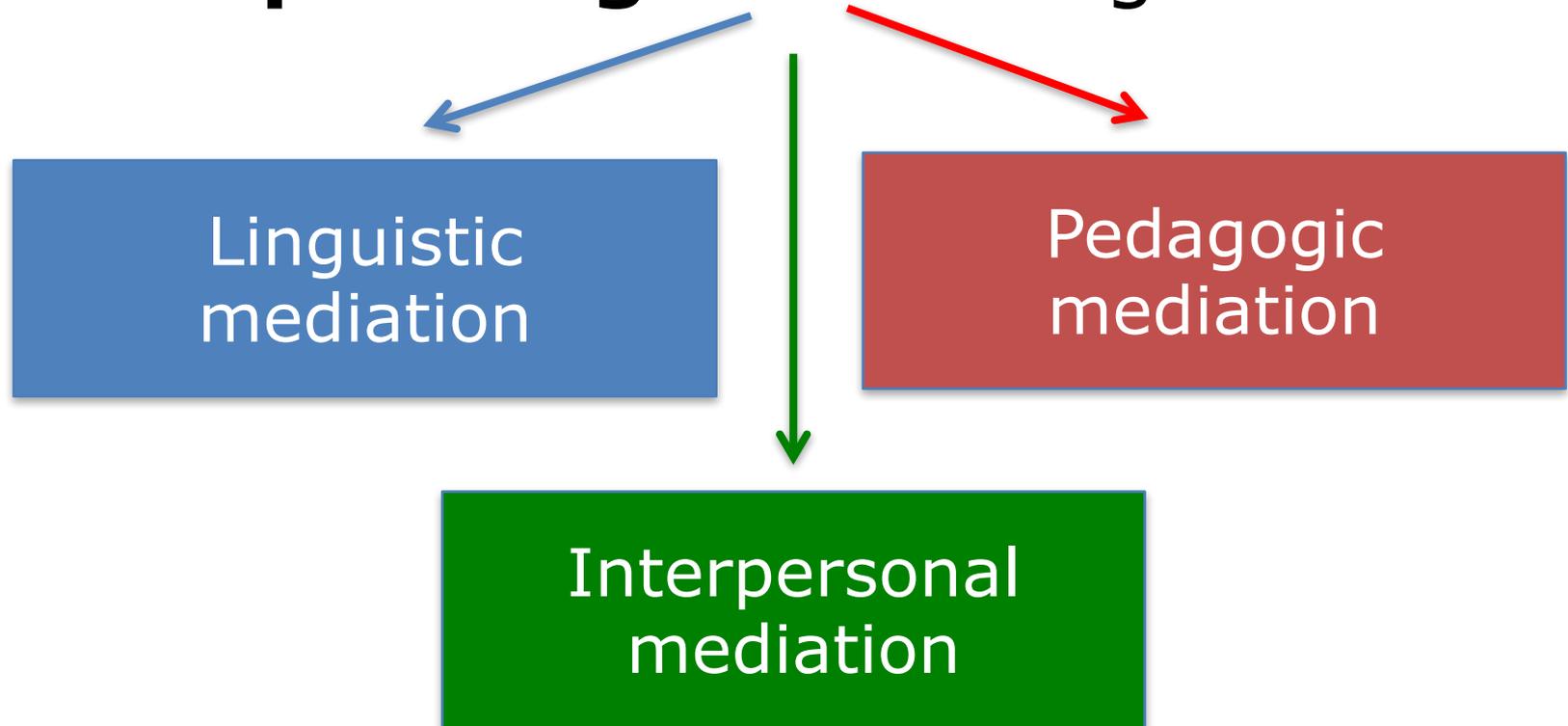
Mediation in CEFR

Table 1 – Macro-functional basis of CEFR categories for communicative language activities

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

Mediation, plurilingual learning contexts and ESAP

University of Westminster, students from **160 countries**, pluricultural and **plurilingual** learning context



Mediation, plurilingual learning contexts and ESAP

ESAP students:
share a common language



Mediation as interpersonal bridging

Mediation tasks:
Individual & Social
Private & Public

Seminars
Tutorials
Presentations
Collaborative work

Mediation, plurilingual learning contexts and ESAP

Pedagogically...

- Sits very well with TBL and its private and public phases, and
- Lends itself to the resolution of collaborative, discipline-specific tasks which are central to our ESAP courses.

II. Mediation strategies in ESAP course design

An example (pilot phase)

Three p-g students on the 7-week ESAP course:

Female 1: MA Eng Lit, IELTS 6.5-CEFR B2/C1, India

Male: MSc Science, IELTS 6.0-CEFR B2, India

Female 2 (M): MBA, 6.5-CEFR B2/C1, China

Task: You are to take part in a role play. You are sharing a student house. This has caused a number of issues. 1. Spend some time reviewing the information on your role card; 2. In private, discuss the task, how you're going to organise it, and your roles before beginning the interaction. Flatmate 1 will start the conversation.



Performance on task:

A few salient features

Mediation as interpersonal bridging

- Asking for **clarification** (e.g. “for example...?”);
- **Silence** to avoid further confrontation;
- Suggesting **alternatives** (e.g. “how about...”);
- **Summarising agreement + presenting options** to deal with issues (e.g. “So...” “OK, so take turns”, “OK, so we share responsibilities”).

Task evaluation

- Evaluation: conflict seems to be resolved rather quickly at times; need for mediating strategies to be taught; the role of mediator is central.



How student saw
her role as a mediator

Student on
mediation strategies



Enabling attitudes, strategies & skills

Mediation as linguistic bridging

- **Translating/interpreting:** (e.g. text-content, views, approaches- in a language other than English or in English but as i+1)
- **Clarifying** (e.g. "Do we understand...?", "Are we clear...?");
- **Checking access & tools** (e.g. "Who knows about...?", "What language (formal/informal) do we..?");
- **Co-creating meanings** (e.g. "What do you understand by...").

Enabling attitudes, strategies & skills

Mediation as pedagogic bridging

- **Checking understanding** (e.g. “What do we understand...?”);
- **Agreeing on outcomes** (e.g. “What do we want to...?”, “How do we...?”);
- **Making collective decisions** (e.g. “How do we go about..?”, “Who would like to be...?”).

Enabling attitudes, strategies & skills

Mediation as interpersonal bridging

- **Summarising agreement** (e.g. “Shall we then agree on... ?”);
- **Suggesting options** (e.g. “How about..?”);
- **Proposing a course of action** (e.g. “Ok, so [shall] we....”).

Mediation tasks for ESAP

Aims:

- To raise students' awareness of the role of mediation (on all its dimensions) in learning and professional contexts;
- To provide a safe space for students to acquire or develop new attitudes, strategies and skills;
- To 'rehearse' for more complex tasks (e.g. agreeing/disagreeing for seminar participation).

Pre- & post-task activities

PRE: 'Dialoguing in private'

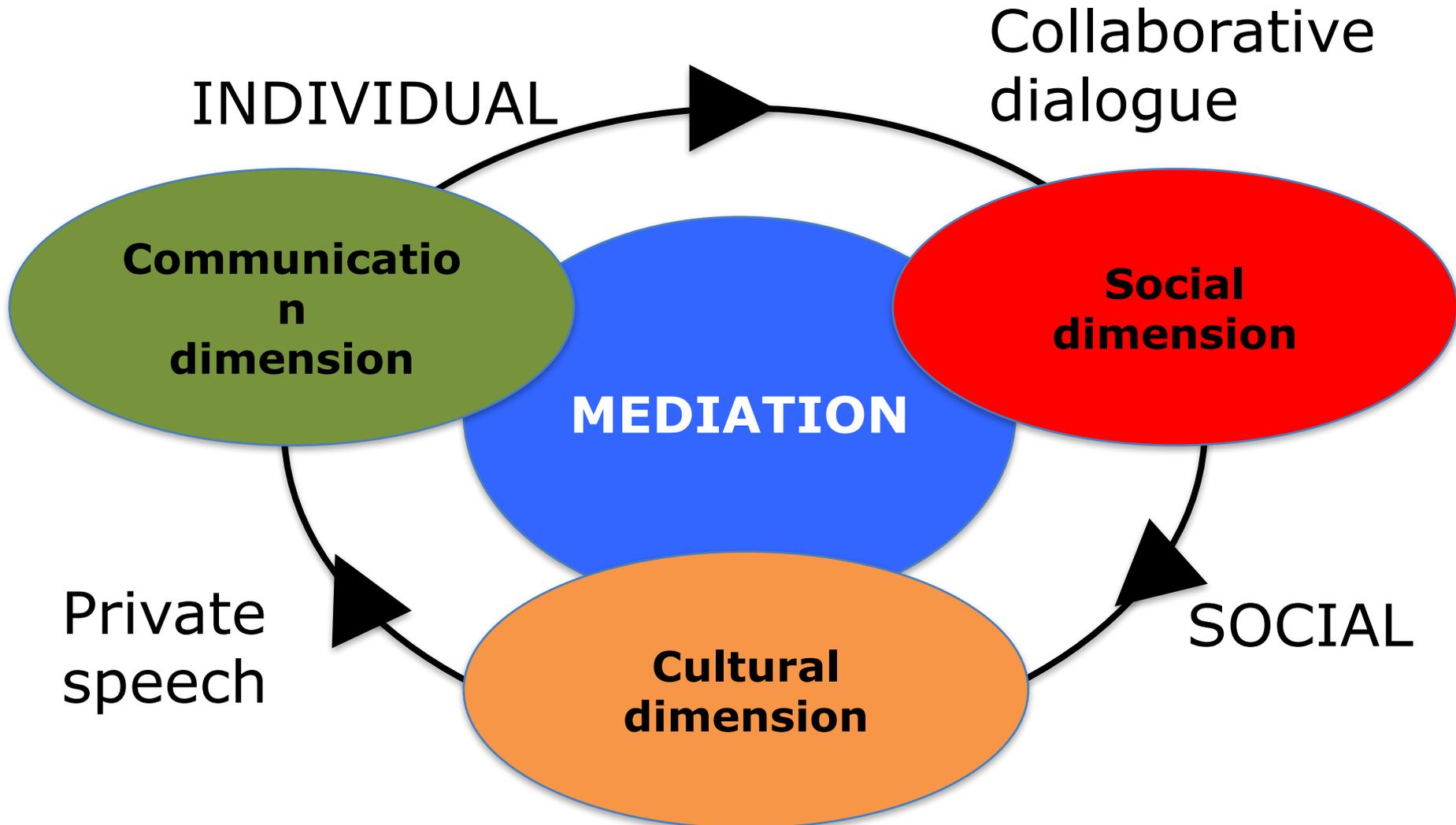
- **What** (to do)
- **How** (to solve the task)
- **Who** (will do what)
- **When** (things are going to happen)
- **In what** language/s

Pre- & post-task activities

POST: 'Reflective evaluation' (on attitudes, strategies & skills)

- **Communication** (linguistic resources for private phase, linguistic mediation, conflict resolution strategies)
- **Social** (facilitating collaborative interaction, turn-taking skills, interruption strategies)
- **Cultural** (showing cultural awareness to explain how things work in different cultures- including disciplinary cultures)

Mediation



Examples of ESAP mediation tasks

1. Selecting and interpreting information to complete a task (pre-sessional ESAP)

Choose an article in your own language about the impact that the Internet has had on your own discipline (e.g. it's made collaboration between professionals from different parts of the world possible). You may want to focus on the advantages, the disadvantages or both.

Then prepare a 3-minute presentation on the results of your search for a non-specialist audience.

Task demands

- **Mediating:** Linguistic mediation traditionally understood as translation and interpretation, content mediation- audience;
- **Cognitive:** Evaluate information and select its suitability for a specific purpose (e.g. preparing an academic presentation, audience);
- **Social/Sociolinguistic:** Shape a message suitable for the context and audience;
- **Linguistic:** Create a meaningful message, use available linguistic resources;
- **Disciplinary:** Show disciplinary specifics (e.g. what is important), as well as discipline-specific conventions.

Examples of ESAP mediation tasks

2. Re-interpreting information for diverse audiences (in-session ESAP)

Read the following case study about (discipline-specific incident). Now decide how you would present the case to the following audiences:

1. Your partner or a friend
2. A colleague at work
3. At a court hearing

Applied to nursing...

Read the following case study about Lisa, a four-month-old female infant:

I first met Lisa, a four-month-old female infant, on one of my morning shifts in the paediatric ward. She had been admitted with a diagnosis of a urinary tract infection (UTI). Because it is quite rare for an infant this young to develop a UTI she had been hospitalised to run a series of tests, especially on her kidneys, although poor maternal hygiene care was also considered.
[...]

How would you present the case to

1. Your partner or a friend
2. Another nurse in your ward
3. At a court hearing in a case of parental negligence.

Task demands

- **Mediating:** Social and disciplinary with a strong focus on audience variation and needs;
- **Cognitive:** Evaluate information and select its suitability for a specific purpose and a particular audience;
- **Social/Sociolinguistic:** Shape a message suitable for a specific purpose, context and audience;
- **Linguistic:** Manipulate linguistic resources to meet the purposes and needs of diverse audiences;

III. Challenges and opportunities for ESAP practitioners

Challenges

- Curriculum review to incorporate mediating tasks;
- Revision of learning outcomes and assessments;
- Task design skills, demands of piloting new materials;
- Implementation of changes may create resistance.

Opportunities

- Create a new learning experience;
- Raise students' awareness of a (new) set of attitudes, strategies and skills (social & cultural dimensions);
- Provide activities with a strong link to employability;
- Enhance student experience;
- Collaborate with ESAP colleagues (planning, designing, piloting & implementing);
- Collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines.

Final thought

Mediation, on any of its dimensions, can play a central role in language learning and teaching as it involves a set of attitudes, strategies and skills geared to enhancing social, cultural, and individual understandings of the diverse composition of contemporary learning and work contexts. And ESAP provides an ideal learning space where **this can happen.**

Thank you!

j.gimenez1@westminster.ac.uk