COMMUNICATIVE-INTERCULTURAL APPROACH
AND THE PARADIGM OF IMMEDIACY
(*Threshold levels* from 1975, *CEFR* 2001, *Companion Volume* 2018)

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Abstract

The thesis of this article is that the Companion Volume of the CEFR, published in February 2018, could not propose, contrary to its authors' main objective, satisfactory modes of assessing mediation competence because its authors had not really become aware of, or at least not questioned, the paradigm of immediacy dominant in methodological thinking about language teaching since the methodology, significantly called "direct", of the early years of the twentieth century. A critical analysis of its descriptors is carried out here, with particular reference to the "genes" that the communicative-intercultural approach has inherited from its global reference situation, the tourist journey, namely the inchoative, the punctual, the perfective and the individual, all of which are incompatible with the mediation paradigm. In the final analysis, this blockage on the part of the authors of the Companion Volume can be explained by their essential objective, which is to propose modes of assessment compatible with the tests proposed by the international certification bodies that have been monitoring the Council of Europe's linguistic guidelines for almost half a century: these tests must "provide assessors with a 'snapshot', an *im–mediate* photograph of the candidates' language competences; in both senses of the word, i.e., by means of an extrapolation based on performances achieved (1) on the spot, without delay, in an (2) unmediated way, with no other intermediary between the candidates and the language to be produced, than the supports and instructions of the assessment system alone".

Acronyms

−DLC: Didactics of Languages-Cultures
−CFER: 2001 *Common Framework European of Reference* (COE 2001)
−CV: 2018 *Companion Volume*, COE 2018)
−LPU-COE: Language Policy Unit of Council of Europe

Introduction

Many language educators and teachers −testimonies come from several European countries− were stunned and even, for those who were expecting a lot, dismayed, to find that the February 2018 *Companion Volume* (COE 2018, henceforth "CV") took into account none of the many criticisms levelled against the CEFR (COE 2001) since its publication more than 15 years earlier[1], and that its shortcomings and flaws were even worsening, to the point of clearly calling into

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[1] Cf. e.g. Anne Friederique-Delouis 2008 and the publications listed in the introduction to Maurer & Puren 2019, p. 1.

question the scientific credibility and didactic feasibility of the new proficiency scales, particularly those most eagerly awaited by most teachers, covering mediation, culture and literary texts.[2]

In this article, I propose to show that the fundamental didactic reason for this failure is the fossilization of its authors' thinking on the communicative-intercultural approach as it has been developed in didactics of languages-cultures (henceforth « DLC ») for half a century now, based on a paradigm of "immediacy". This notion of "immediacy" is attested to in the writings of specialists in several human sciences, in particular philosophers and art theorists, but its equivalent can be found in what the direct methodologists of the early 20th century called "direct intuition". Here, for example, is what Adrien Godart said in 1902 in a forward-looking lecture on the application of the direct method to the reading of texts:

> *Direct reading gives [the student] immediate revelation of the meaning of the passage. In a single glance, he embraces the sentence being read, or rather, he ceases to see it, to hear it. Even if he ignores certain words, he has, from the very first moment, a more or less clear perception of the general meaning and order of the whole.* (Godart 1903, p. 1)

This paradigm of immediacy is already at work in the first major text of the Language Policy Unit of Council of Europe's (now LPU-COE)[3] on language teaching, *The Threshold Level* (COE 1975, French version *Un Niveau-seuil* 1976), which widely disseminated the communicative approach in Europe. It can be found in the descriptors of the 2001 *CEFR* proficiency level scales, and it is still as present and prominent in the 2018 *Companion Volume* (CV) (COE 2018), whether in the supplements to the 2001 CEFR grids or in the proposed new grids, ... including in the mediation grids, which, understandably, can only create serious shortcomings. I have chosen to begin my text here with a preliminary analysis of these two WCC documents that predate the CV: it would be counter-productive to focus criticism solely on the CV, suggesting that it is the poor quality of its conception and drafting that is solely to blame, and that we can continue to consider the CEFR as the reference document for DLC, while allowing it to continue to cause very serious damage, particularly in school teaching.

To conclude this article, after summarizing the reductive effects of this paradigm, I will present the various possible interpretations of the CV's limitations and shortcomings. There is, of course, the unchallenged legacy of the communicative-intercultural approach and its paradigm of immediacy, as well as a conception of assessment reduced to that which individual certifications allow, the authors' only real objective. But there is also, on the part of the private organizations that have taken control of the LPU-COE, a strategy aimed at obtaining the replacement of national examinations by their international certifications.

1. Threshold levels in the 1970s

At this point in the WCC's political project, the Council's aim was to promote peace and cooperation between member countries by facilitating exchanges between the citizens of these countries. Language teaching took on this objective by developing a methodology designed to give these citizens the ability to exchange simple, concrete information in a foreign language and abroad, in a situation of immediate and direct language interaction, in real time and face-

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[2] That's why the Italian association LEND (Lingua e Nuova Didattica) commissioned me to write this article for their magazine. In the end, I decided not to go ahead with the publication in view of the changes requested by the Editorial Board, and I'm publishing the article on my website.

[3] This offshoot of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe was first called Modern Languages Group, then Language Policy Division. For the sake of convenience, we'll confine ourselves here to the current name.

to-face[4] , with people they meet. To harmonize each of the *Threshold Levels* by language, a single communicative macro-situation has been chosen –the tourist trip[5]– which has been broken down into a series of corresponding micro-situations (at the hotel, in a restaurant, in a store, on a trip, etc.) analyzed from the point of view of the learners' communicative competences. *Threshold levels* and their corresponding language realizations are lists of notions and speech acts considered indispensable to ensure a minimum level of communication throughout this macro-communication situation.

What's particularly important here is that this social objective of reference (the ability to interact immediately face-to-face with foreigners in a foreign language) in this social situation of reference (the tourist trip) has generated the "DNA", *i.e.* the set of "genes", or fundamental characteristics (in the strong sense of the qualifier) of the communicative approach. During a tourist trip, we spend our time meeting people for the first time (*inchoative* gene), with whom the relationship will be one of individual to individual (*individual* gene), with whom we'll stay for a very short time (*punctual* gene), and whom we'll then leave for good (*perfective* gene). All these genes are to be found in the reference learning activity of the communicative approach, i.e. the inter-individual exchange of information in a brief communication situation that is new every time, as in the series of communicative exercises that combine *peer work* and the *information gap*.[6]

These genes of the communicative approach will naturally come to combine, in a mutually reinforcing way, with the direct paradigm, which has its origins in the "natural" or "maternal" method and which the direct methodology of the early 20th[e] century had systematized[7].

Like any paradigm as a fundamental principle of coherence, the direct paradigm had been extended, in the course of the development of direct methodology during the 1900s, to all its teaching-learning objects, as can be seen in the passage from the last official direct instruction for school language teaching:

> *Students will discover and feel the beauty of texts directly and for themselves; they will come face-to-face with a writer's personality through immediate contact with fragments. The method applied to the teaching of literature will therefore be the same one that has given possession of vocabulary and grammar: it eliminates all intermediaries, it teaches the word by image, grammar by example, literature by text; and everywhere it brings the pupil directly face to face with concrete or spiritual realities, and not with words or abstract ideas.*
>
> Official French instruction of December 1908

With the direct methodology of the early 20th[e] century, a paradigm of immediacy was established in DLC, which was to last throughout the century without being called into question. Within the communicative approach, this paradigm can be found in the fields of semantic explanation and grammar, as well as in the treatment of authentic documents and culture.

–To explain the meaning of the lines in the basic dialogues of the didactic units, the communicative approach, like the previous audiovisual methodology, relies on the learners'

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[4] Here we already have two semes of the qualifier "immediate": instantaneous (with no intermediate time), and unmediated (with no intermediate active element: person, technique, language, reflection...). The two semes are caught up in a recursive logic: mediation requires time, and conversely any relationship, to maintain itself over time, must resort to mediation.

[5] On the probable reason for this choice, see *infra* note 29 , p. 14.

[6] Cf. Puren 2014a-en for more details on this "genetic analysis" of tourist travel, and for illustrations of these genes in the features of communicative situations and dialogues in communicative textbooks.

[7] See Puren 1988a, chap. 2.2.1, pp. 80-84.

intuition to relate these dialogues directly to the communicative situation. In this field, the paradigm of immediacy is so well integrated into the DNA of the communicative approach that, to my knowledge, its promoters never felt the need, during the 1980s-1990s, to recall all the techniques for the direct explanation of vocabulary developed by direct methodology at the beginning of the XX[e] century: definition, description, example, synonyms, antonyms, hyperonyms and hyponyms, gesture, mimicry, image, etc.[8] One of the reference authors of the communicative approach was H.G. Widdowson, and his 1978 work was translated into French in 1981, *Une approche communicative de l'enseignement des langues*[9]. Yet French communicative methodologists have never taken up or even disseminated one of his main ideas, explicitly set out in an entire chapter (pp. 178-180), according to which the teaching of communication in L2 should naturally be based from the outset on the communicative competence of L1 learners.[10]

–When it came to grammar, the initial trend –fortunately countered by the didactic common sense of teachers and textbook authors– was to move directly from the presentation of new language forms (in the form of dialogues and then notional-functional lists) to their re-use in simulated communicative situations, doing away with the intermediate phases of the standard school procedure for teaching-learning grammar since the beginning of the 20th[e] century, namely conceptualization, application and training[11]. Notional-functional grammar, which is supposed to provide learners with language formulations that can be immediately and directly reused in communicative situations similar to those in which they were introduced, has thus made it possible to do away with the two forms of mediation previously provided in the standard procedure by these intermediate phases, namely cognitive mediation (through reflection on the language and reflective application of its rules and regularities) and technical mediation (by means of more or less mechanical training exercises).

–For authentic documents, the communicative approach generated a specific documentary logic, the "support logic", which tended to exploit texts, even literary ones, as simple pretexts for learners to speak as immediately as possible and directly reuse their language content, without going through the technical mediation previously provided by the long "explanation of texts" of the active methodology[12]. The same applies to documents introducing knowledge of the foreign culture, generally placed at the very end of the unit, knowledge that learners are invited to identify and reformulate themselves from the very first reading.

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[8] It wasn't until 2001 that a book devoted to the subject was published in FLE (Véronique Castellotti, *La langue maternelle en classe de langue étrangère*. Paris: CLE international, 124 p.). The set of techniques for direct semantic explanation constitutes one of the seven identifiable methodological "objects", *i.e.* parts of methodology constituted autonomously enough to be transposable as such from one methodology to another (cf. Puren 2019g-en, p. 11).

[9] WIDDOWSON Henry George (1978), Une approche communicative de l'enseignement des langues. Paris: Hatier-CRÉDIF, transl. fr. 1981, 192 p. [1e ed. *Teaching language as communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, 168 p.].

[10] It should also be noted that the reference teacher is the native teacher, which was not yet the case for the teacher using audiovisual courses, even though the use of L1 was formally discouraged.

[11] On this standard procedure, see Puren 2016c. On the communicative approach version of this procedure, cf. Puren 010. For an example of a textbook whose didactic units are built on the purely communicative grammatical teaching-learning model, cf. 1988a, Equipo Pragma textbook file, *Para empezar. Curso comunicativo de español* (1e éd. 1983).

[12] On active methodology, cf. Puren 1988a, 3e part, pp. 140 *ff*. On the "document logic" of active methodology, the "support logic" of the communicative approach and the three other logics identifiable in DLC, cf. Puren 066-en and his bibliographical references. Note that the support logic is only maintained in communicative textbooks up to level B1: from level B2 onwards, and sometimes in part as early as level B1, learners are asked, orally and collectively in class, to mobilize their acquired linguistic and cultural knowledge in the context of their comprehension, and to extract new linguistic and cultural knowledge from it: the "document logic" of active methodology is thus –generally unconsciously– taken up by textbook designers: there are no "communicative" textbooks (in the sense of taking on the characteristics of the communicative approach) for levels B2 to C1.

–In its treatment of culture, the intercultural approach, which complements the communicative approach on the cultural side, inherits all of the latter's characteristics, and is therefore influenced by the same paradigm of immediacy. Think, in particular, of the inchoative and punctual genes found in the semantics of all the nouns or expressions used before the adjective intercultural to designate the equivalent of what used to be called "civilization teaching": "*approach, encounter, sensitization, initiation, discovery,* intercultural *awareness*"[13]. These same genes explain the importance of this intercultural approach:

> –*social* stereotypes: these are the representations we have of foreigners even before meeting them for the first time (inchoative gene),
> –and, more specifically, *negative* social stereotypes: these are the ones most likely to hinder, or even break, communication, when there is not enough time to identify and challenge them (occasional discomfort)[14].

All these genes interlock and reinforce each other within the paradigm of immediacy: it's because every encounter is a personal and unique experience, direct and in the moment, with different people, that cultural competence can be thought of exclusively in the intercultural mode. As soon as there is a collective and repetition over the long term, a multitude of mediations are required, supported by institutions, conventions, shared histories, collective issues, common languages, techniques and shared modes of cohabitation and co-action. As soon as there is collective action and repetition over the long term, the notion of intercultural is no longer sufficient, because it is linked to that of multicultural: we need to call on that of pluricultural (which is emerging in the CEFR, but is not yet really detached from intercultural) and that of co-cultural, or culture of action, shared by and for joint action[15].

2. The 2001 CEFR

The 2001 CEFR carefully distinguishes between (1) the management of language training, for which assessment tools are proposed, in particular the three general scales of "common levels of competence" (pp. 25-28), and (2) didactics, i.e. the teaching-learning of languages-cultures.

As far as language training management is concerned, the success of the CEFR is obvious, and has spread beyond Europe's borders, even though the idea of proficiency scales with level descriptors was not new –indeed, the authors of the CEFR explicitly drew on existing ALTE and DIALANG grids. But these six-level assessment tools have become the benchmark for all international language certifications.

As far as the didactics of cultural languages are concerned, the CEFR has another success to its credit. This is the fact that, for the first time in Europe, this document clearly establishes two changes in the two parameters that have historically determined the development of didactic configurations[16] , namely the social objective of reference –what we want students to be able to do themselves in society in a foreign language-culture– and the social situation of reference –in

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[13] See also in Puren 2014a-en, p. 7, the analysis of an extract from Geneviève Zarate 1993 presenting the transition from teaching culture in active methodology to the intercultural approach. Note in passing the grid "*Establish* a pluricultural space" in the CV (my emphasis): it's "manage", a durative verb, and not "establish", an inchoative verb, that corresponds to the challenge of "living in a multilingual and multicultural Europe" (CEFR, p. 6).

[14] I have developed these ideas in numerous articles and lectures since the early 2000s. See e.g. Puren 2002b, 2006g, 2008e and 2014a-en.

[15] Cf., in addition to Puren 2008e (already cited in the previous note), Puren 020 (table of the various components of cultural competence, with corresponding T.P. and answer key).

[16] On the notion of "didactic configuration", see Puren 029 and its bibliographical references.

which they should be able to implement this capacity for action, or "competence". From now on, the CEFR aims to prepare learners "for life in a multilingual and multicultural Europe" (p. 6), i.e.:

> (a) to live permanently with foreigners, but also, in their own country, with people of completely or partially different languages and cultures: hence the appearance in this document of the objective of acquiring plurilingual and pluricultural competences;

> (b) and to act socially with them, whether to "make society" together as citizens (in the public sphere), or to work with them (in the educational and professional spheres): hence the appearance in this document of the action-oriented perspective[17].

But the authors of the CEFR remain closely tied to the paradigm of immediacy, which structurally blocks any possibility of effectively taking into account the challenges and constraints of living, forming society and working together:

–From a theoretical point of view, the notion of pluriculturality is not really separated from that of interculturality: it is a kind of multiple interculturality, where pluricultural competence is not specifically elaborated beyond the sum of intercultural competences acquired in a multicultural society[18]:

> *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to communicate in language and interact culturally of a social actor who possesses, to varying degrees, mastery of several languages and experience of several cultures*. *This is not a superimposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather the existence of a complex, even composite, skill from which the user can draw.* (p. 129)

The second part of the quotation is highly significant in this respect: while the qualifier "complex" suggests a whole of a nature different from that of the sum of its parts, the qualifier "composite", presented as more advanced from the point of view of integration than "complex" (cf. "even"), is in fact backward, since this term designates in language an assembly of distinct components. Yet only a truly pluricultural competence –i.e., one in which the totality of experiences produces a competence of a different nature from that of the sum of different experiences simply considered by the authors of the CEFR (cf. "draw")– can ensure a cultural mediation function at the time of a new intercultural experience: mediation can only be ensured by a third element.

–From a practical point of view, the methodological implications of the two new social objectives and social reference situations are not taken into account. Indeed, the CEFR does not begin to elaborate, either for teaching/learning or for assessment, what might be:

> (a') a plurilingual "approach" or "methodology": mediation, which is *a priori* the equivalent, for this plurilingual methodology, of what interaction is to the communicative approach, is simply described in the old forms of translation and interpreting, and the competence descriptors proposed in this document are strictly monolingual;

> (b') and an "approach" or "actional perspective": the notion of social action does not appear in the CEFR with the status it should have there, i.e. the equivalent, in actional perspective, of the status of interaction in the communicative approach and the status of

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[17] In school education, it's a question of training learners to be such social actors; in adult education, it's a question of drawing on their competences as social actors to participate autonomously and responsibly, individually and collectively, in their own learning.

[18] For a detailed analysis of the notion of culture in the CEFR, based on an exhaustive survey of the corresponding occurrences, see Puren 2011j, chap. 3.1 "Analysis of the concept of 'cultural competence' in the CEFR", pp. 11-21.

mediation in plurilingual methodology[19]. I have shown elsewhere[20] , in the analysis of three grids in this document dealing with actional uses of language –"Essays and reports" (p. 52), "Notes, messages and forms" (p. 69) and "Cooperating" (p. 71)– the shortcomings due to the failure to take account of the actional perspective. I'll take up the "Cooperate" grid here (my deletions in strikethrough, my proposed additions in bold):

	COOPERATE
C2	~~Like C1~~ **Suggests a halt to the discussion in order to draw conclusions and make the necessary decisions to continue or halt the cooperation.**
C1	~~Ability to link own contribution to that of others.~~ **Can clarify points of agreement and disagreement, inviting others to elaborate or record them, in preparation for final conclusions and decisions.**
B2	Can facilitate discussion by following up and commenting on statements and inferences made by others.
	Can sustain conversation on familiar ground by confirming understanding, inviting others to participate, etc.
B1	Can use a basic repertoire of language and strategies to facilitate further conversation or discussion. Can summarize and focus a conversation, making it easier to stay on topic.
	Can partially rephrase the speaker's words to confirm mutual understanding and facilitate the development of ongoing ideas. Can invite someone to join the discussion.
A2	May indicate that he/she is following what is being said. **Can indicate that he/she is not following what is being said at a given moment, by asking for help in understanding, or on the contrary by letting others know that they are continuing without his/her participation.**
A1	~~No descriptor available~~ **Can decline invitations to cooperate in language if he/she feels unable to do so, so as not to disturb others.**

(CEFR p. 71)

My bold additions to the A1, A2 and C2 levels reveal one of the effects of the communicative approach: the authors don't think to take into consideration the cases –which are highly relevant here from an action perspective, *i.e.* from the point of view of *the* effectiveness of collective action– where the best thing to do is not to take part in the communication, possibly just listening to others without taking part in the conversation, and the cases where, from a certain point onwards, the best thing to do is to suggest interrupting the communication.

The opposing genes of the communicative approach and the action-oriented perspective (cf. 2014a-en, tables p. 6 and p. 8) can be used to analyze the descriptors of levels B1 and B2 of this grid, if we place ourselves in the context of an ongoing collective action, such as that of a project lasting several weeks or months in the public, educational or professional spheres:

–*Inchoative/repetitive*

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[19] I have proposed the term "co-action" for this reference action of the actional perspective, in the sense of collective action with a collective objective: cf. Puren 029 and his bibliographical references pp. 2-3.

[20] Puren 2009c pp. 22-24 and 2016g pp. 58-59.

An employee with an A1 or A2 level in the working language to be used at the meeting will not put himself in the situation considered in these descriptors, and will take prior measures based on his previous experience of meetings where he has already found himself in this situation: ensure the presence of someone capable of acting as an interpreter on site; request in advance the visual aids to be used during the meeting (in order to translate them or have them translated); consult in advance the written documentation relating to the objectives of the meeting and the themes to be dealt with; prepare personal documentation in another language in which he or she is proficient, which will enable him or her to contribute new and original elements; etc. It should be noted, with regard to this last example, that L1 is considered in this CEFR "Cooperate" grid only as a hindrance, as in communicative approach classes, which is in contradiction with the idea of plurilingual competence put forward elsewhere by the authors.

–The one-off/ the long-term
Although the descriptors in this CEFR grid place the exchange within a certain duration (cf. "summarize", "take stock", "facilitate the continuation of the conversation"), this duration here does not go beyond the framework of the exchange, taken as an autonomous, self-sufficient unit (as are the didactic units in communicative textbooks: cf. 2016a "Corrigé de l'exercice", Table 1, "3. Le ponctuel", p. 1, and Table 2, "3. L'imperfectif", p. 2). However, from the perspective of working together, the cooperation episode is bound to take place over a longer period of time, with previous meetings (apart from the very first one), and subsequent meetings (apart from the very last one). Knowing how to cooperate means not only knowing how to react in real time during a meeting, but also knowing how to make the most of past meetings: recalling points already dealt with and points to be reviewed, for example. When it comes to "making society together", citizens inscribe their actions within instituted frameworks –political parties, trade unions, associations– which even go well beyond the duration of their own militant life.

–Perfective/ imperfective
Knowing how to cooperate also means knowing how to take future meetings into account: pointing out that such and such a point will be dealt with later in another scheduled meeting, noting the points to be dealt with in the following meeting (whether time has run out, there has been no agreement, or a new point has emerged during the meeting), and drafting minutes accordingly: unlike the perfective gene, which enables us to act solely on reaction and interaction modes, the imperfective gene requires us to implement proaction.

–Individual/ collective
Paradoxically, if you think about it, this "Cooperate" grid only considers the cooperative action of the person being assessed, whereas in a cooperative action, by its very nature, cooperation is supposed to be the work of all participants. In a context of long-term cooperative work, as in the case of civic or professional action, knowing how to cooperate also means knowing how to ask for the cooperation of others, and knowing how to benefit from the cooperation of others: finally, it means acting with others within a more or less institutionalized framework designed to facilitate cooperation, with established principles, standards and procedures. In the CEFR "Cooperate" grid, assessment takes place in a neutral, blank space, in which an individual's actions are considered to be isolated from those of others.

With regard to the descriptor proposed by the authors of the CEFR at level C1, I will simply repeat an analysis I already published in 2009:

> *We're really in the midst of the communicative ideology that the authors of the CEFR have decidedly failed to overcome: to cooperate well, it's not enough to communicate well; knowing how to communicate obviously makes it possible to solve communicational problems, but it doesn't make it possible to solve –and may, on the contrary, have the effect of obscuring– actional problems (i.e., different conceptions of action) and different*

> *issues (personal, collective and social). Action efficiency requires that these problems and issues be clarified and debated by social actors, to the point of assuming the risks of confrontation and even rupture: it is precisely the competences required for these activities of clarification and debate* [...] *that are the "high-level" competences expected of a social actor.* (2009c, pp. 22-23)

The authors of this grid could no doubt retort that most of these social action evaluation criteria cannot be taken into account in individual certification tests, but this is precisely where one of the major perverse effects of the CEFR evaluation grids lies, namely that they limit the criteria to those that this type of evaluation can incorporate[21]. For proof of this, we need only compare the criteria of the CEFR "Cooperate" grid with those proposed in pedagogy for the evaluation of group projects. Here's an example, published on an official site of the French Ministry of Education, designed to illustrate the assessment methods used for "EPI" projects, which, as their name doesn't really indicate (the acronym stands for "Enseignements Pratiques Interdisciplinaires"), are projects carried out during the year in the 3e class (14-15 year-olds) and presented during an oral defense at the end-of-year Brevet exam:

> ### Success criteria, individual / group assessment methods
> **–***Quality of documentary research and use by students.*
> *–Quality of arguments, regulation of argumentative debate.*
> *–Quality of students' visual productions and storytelling.*
> *–Peer evaluation at various stages of the project's construction.*
> *–Suggestions for improvement from the teachers.*
> *–Outreach of productions within the school, degree of mobilization by the school's civic bodies, highlighting the contribution to the PEAC* [Parcours d'Éducation Artistique et Culturelle] and *the Parcours Citoyen.* (M.E.N.R.S. 2016, p. 7)

I comment on this evaluation grid in the 2019 book written with Bruno Maurer:

> *If the CEFR had genuinely linked the three parts of its subtitle (*Learning –Teaching – Assessing*), it would have included in its grids criteria that addressed not only the product, but also the learning and teaching process (cf. the item "Suggestions for improvement by teachers"), including the question of the social projection of the final product (cf. the very last item in the list above). The extent to which the use of international certifications as a means of validating school language curricula risks causing a catastrophic regression in the complexity –and interest! of assessment practices focused precisely on training students as social actors.* (Maurer & Puren 2019, pp. 167-168)

The "*Companion Volume*", as its name suggests, simply adds grids to each other (24 for mediation alone!...) and descriptors to existing grids, without calling into question the paradigm of immediacy. It thus reproduces the same shortcomings and flaws of the 2001 CEFR, but makes them worse insofar as this paradigm does not allow its authors to satisfactorily address and deal with their main stated objective, namely the evaluation of mediation.

3. 2018 Companion Volume

The "Cooperate" grid on page 104 of the CV, which has been updated and expanded, shows that the authors have merely added to the descriptors of the 2001 CEFR.

For example, at the additional "Pre-A1" level, they add (if you can call it that...) "No descriptor available", when they could have suggested, for example, "Can indicate, at least by mimicry or

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[21] Tests designed on the basis of action scenarios within a framework of global mini-simulations do, however, make it possible to integrate action criteria to some extent, as shown by two official French certifications, the CLES (Certificat de compétences en Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur, www.certification-cles.fr/), and the DCL (Diplôme de Compétence en Langue, www.education.gouv.fr/cid55748/le-diplome-de-competence-en-langue-dcl.html).

gesture, that he/she cannot cooperate"... which is a way of helping communication by not hindering that of others.

A descriptor has also been added at C2 level: "Can skillfully link contributions to those of other interlocutors, widen the scope of the interaction and ensure that it leads to a conclusion", which takes over from the 2001 C1 level descriptor the same criterion from what I called above "communicative ideology". It should also be noted that what is considered the supreme criterion for success is to reach a "conclusion" –we're sticking to communicative language and not, as would be required in an action-oriented perspective, a "decision".

But it is of course the CV's treatment of mediation that suffers most from the authors' dependence on the communicative-intercultural approach and its paradigm of immediacy.

Bruno Maurer, in Maurer & Puren 2019, p. 36, rightly points out that mediation is never defined in the CV, and that the authors simply apply it, in the compilatory logic that already characterized the 2001 CEFR, to different objects: texts, concepts, communication (cf. p. 178: "MEDIATION. Mediating a text –Mediating concepts– Mediating communication"). The CV's "mediate a text" grid was particularly eagerly awaited, given the importance of texts in DLC, but, as we can immediately see from reading the descriptors, the notion of "mediation" has no consistency of its own beyond comprehension and expression, since in communicative logic it's simply a matter of transmitting in another way to others what the text has conveyed to us. But it is expression, in this logic, that takes precedence over comprehension: language is assessed not as a tool for understanding texts (as in the PIRLS or PISA tests), but as a tool for communicating what the candidate has understood from the texts. In other words, assessment is oriented towards the *product communicated*, rather than the *process achieved*.

In the previous chapter, I proposed an analysis of the "Cooperate" grid using the genes of the communicative approach. The CV's "General Mediation" grid (p. 108) is a neat and coherent grid if we confine ourselves to a superficial "clinical examination", but its "genetic analysis" immediately reveals its limits and shortcomings. Its descriptors include two of the genes of the communicative approach, namely the inchoative and the individual, which are closely combined here[22]:

–The inchoative: the mediator's function is conceived as if it were being performed in a totally virgin space, as if it were not being carried out in relation to people who are not simply interlocutors, but who find themselves in instituted milieus, who each have their own culture of action with their own conceptions of mediation –its values, codes, rituals, modus operandi, etc.– based on personal preferences, collective rules for organizing joint work and previous decision-making. They may have already met several times on the same or other issues, and therefore share a common history and experience.

–The individual: the institutional dimension of the mediation space is absent from this grid, as is that of collective mediation, as the other participants are not considered as "co-mediators", but as mere interlocutors.

These two limitations are due to the fact that the temporal dimension is not taken into account: here, time is suspended[23], whereas its management is just as essential as that of relational space. This third, and considerable, limitation betrays a lack of real integration of the action perspective: it is collective action, in fact, that requires communication time to be limited, and

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[22] Here, I reproduce almost verbatim a passage from the analysis proposed on this "General Mediation" grid in Maurer & Puren 2019, pp.189-190.

[23] So much so that the punctual and perfective genes cannot be used in the present analysis.

to end with a period of consultation and decision-making, which may involve agreement on a common position or on another collective action to be taken, but may also involve a statement of disagreement, which must then be managed on the spot and subsequently with specific mediation competences.

Here we come back to a problem I've already mentioned in my analysis of the "Cooperate" grid. The effectiveness of mediation –a criterion that appears at levels C1 and C2 of this grid– cannot be assessed, like communication, in relation to itself, but in relation to the action objective for which mediation is only a means. In this grid, mediation is completely decoupled from the action of "cooperating", since it is considered only as a means at the service of communication... which is itself in reality only a means at the service of action.

The analysis of this "General Mediation" grid and all the others concerning mediation proposed in the CV could be made more complex by using in parallel two other tools I propose in my 2019 book (2019b), namely notional analysis and conceptual analysis.

a) *The notional analysis* is carried out using the different notions of mediation relevant to DLC: educational, didactic, language, cultural, documentary, cognitive, technical, socio-cultural and experiential mediation.

Thus, while the authors of the CV explicitly maintain against all evidence the fiction that the CEFR's priority is learning (cf. the order of the CEFR's subtitle, taken up by the CV: "*Learn – Teach - Assess*", none of the mediation grids proposes assessing learners' ability:

–to be involved in collective actions (educational mediation);

–to help other learners and to work independently, both individually and collectively (didactic mediation);

–use their L1 or L2+n knowledge and competences to learn L2 (language mediation)[24];

–create or adopt, between themselves and their teacher, a common teaching-learning culture (cultural mediation);

–to eliminate irrelevant documents from a documentary file intended to prepare their action, and, in the documents retained, to eliminate irrelevant information and identify missing information, then to seek complementary documents (documentary mediation);

–conceptualize grammatical rules and regularities, explain them to others, and benefit from them (cognitive mediation);

–master or at least identify the effects of the media they use (technical mediation);

–help to ensure harmony between learners and to animate their group (socio-cultural mediation);

–make the classroom a time for "living" in a foreign language (experiential mediation).

b) *Conceptual analysis* is carried out using the antagonistic pairs of concepts object/subject, human/non-human, horizontality/verticality, proximity/distance, resemblance/difference, immediacy/duration, reaction/proaction –pairs that are often found in analyses of mediation in the humanities and educational sciences.

Above, I have already implicitly dealt with the oppositions of immediacy/duration (in relation to the inchoative, punctual and perfective "genes" of the communicative approach), proximity/distance (in relation to the reference situation of this approach, which is the face-to-

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[24] And yet it's a key form of mediation in a learning process in which plurilingual competence –as promoted by the authors of the CEFR– is integrated both as an objective and as a means.

face encounter)[25] and reaction/proaction (in relation to the "Cooperate" grid, cooperation also having to do with the already planned or to be planned follow-up to the joint action). Here are a few examples of possible mobilization of other conceptual pairs on the "General Mediation" grid:

–*Object/subject*: In the logic of the communicative approach, one of whose key concepts is "learner-centeredness", as well as in the logic of individual certification, this grid naturally focuses on the abilities of the mediating subject in relation to the other subjects with whom he or she communicates. As a result, it obscures or downplays mediation by objects and projects. In C1, for example, the authors of the grid consider that the candidate "can convey the important ideas of long, complex texts in a clear, fluent and well-structured way". But complex texts are often, precisely because they are complex, texts that have no linear structure and where ideas cannot be clearly prioritized because they are strongly interrelated, so that these characteristics will strongly influence the exchanges between the subjects. In the action-oriented perspective, moreover, there are no "important" ideas in themselves or within texts, but rather ideas that are more or less *relevant to* the intended action: projects by their very nature perform a mediating function between subjects and objects, to such an extent that Jean-Louis Le Moigne has proposed the concept of "projectivity", which in his view enables us to escape from the "sterilizing alternative of the binary choice between objectivity and subjectivity" (2005, p. 427).

–*Human/non-human*: This opposition needs to be mobilized in particular when communication is mediated by technical means –when there is, to put it another way, "technical mediation". The CV's "General Mediation" grid, though implicit, is clearly thought of as direct person-to-person mediation. But these days, interactions are increasingly mediated by technical devices –particularly digital ones– which at least partly impose their own logic, with their own constraints and demands. In a 2018 article, Aude Seurrat, a specialist in information and communication sciences, recounts her failure, during a joint project, to get LPU-COE experts to take these mediations into account, because they stuck to a conception of interculturality restricted to direct interpersonal encounters; and she explains this blockage by a "digital unthinking". On the other hand, when exchanges take place in the public, educational and professional spheres, even face-to-face, there are always principles, norms, customs and procedures that impose their own mediations, without the intervention of individuals and sometimes even in spite of their interventions.

–*Horizontality/verticality*: In the CV's "General Mediation" grid, mediation takes place between people of equal status. But in many situations, and most often in institutionalized contexts, hierarchical relationships interfere between participants, creating their own mediation effects. In other situations –or in the same ones– more or less bona fide individuals seek to impose themselves on the discussion for their own benefit, or to block it. As Anne Friederique-Delouis writes in her review of the proceedings of a colloquium at the University of Giessen in 2002, where German-speaking educationalists had come together to collectively –and systematically– criticize the CEFR as soon as it was published:

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[25] In Coste and Cavalli 2015 we find a caricatural example of the prevalence of the paradigm of immediacy in the intercultural approach. The authors define mediation as follows: "By mediation, we mean any operation, any device, any intervention that, in a given social context, aims to reduce the distance between two (or even more) poles of alterity that are in tension with each other." (p. 28) In a footnote, they are obliged to acknowledge at once that the definition is not universal, but they nevertheless refuse to abandon it in a way whose logic I leave to my readers to appreciate: "In certain cases, mediation can make the distance clearer and more recognizable, without reducing it, and there are also circumstances in which the work of mediation serves to accentuate the distance, making it more irreducible (for example, in relation to a work of art that breaks completely with the usual norms of reading). This is not in contradiction with the generic definition given here.

Christian PUREN: "The communicative-intercultural approach and the paradigm of immediacy".

One of the key terms in the Framework is obviously "communication". This concept, as used in the CEFR, has not escaped criticism from commentators. According to Hans Barkowski, it is a concept of ideal communication (in the sense of Habermas): the facts communicated are always real, there is a consensus between those taking part in the communication, and they consider themselves to be equal partners. According to Habermas, this type of communication is more the preserve of the socio-cultural elite. (2008, p. 25).

Conclusions

The assessment model proposed in the CEFR and reproduced identically in the CV is marked by the immediacy paradigm generated by the genes of the communicative-intercultural approach and the direct paradigm inherited from direct methodology. It is extremely reductive in relation to the complexity of the problem of evaluation in school didactics (cf. 2001e), as I summarize in Maurer & Puren 2019:

–This model is reductive even when it comes to individual assessment: to paraphrase the official French instruction of 1908, from which we quoted a passage above, we can say that with the CEFR grids, students are assessed directly, by their personal language production alone, and not through their commitment to learning, their progress in mastering the language or their participation in group work.

–This model is also reductive insofar as it does not take into account mediations during learning: neither the student's participation in collective mediation in class, nor the mediation of other actors, students and teacher, nor the mediation of other agents such as L1, projects, didactic tools and devices.

–Finally, this model is reductive because it does not take into account all the other types of mediation at work in school teaching-learning: educational, pedagogical, cognitive, technical, documentary and didactic (p. 181).

The application of such a model to the design of teaching-learning can therefore only be catastrophic, and the authors of the CV show incredible irresponsibility in welcoming it: "In fact, the CEFR is not only being used to provide transparency and clear reference points from an assessment perspective, but also increasingly being used for curriculum reform and pedagogy" (p. 25).

Moreover, there is an abysmal discrepancy between the claims of the authors of the CEFR, echoed by those of the CV, to offer a tool for training citizens in a democratic Europe, and their assessment model, designed solely for individual certification tests, where each person claims his or her own competences for purely personal gain.

An initial interpretation of the evaluation features proposed in these two documents is that they have been taken over, more or less consciously, from the immediacy model inherited from the communicative-intercultural approach and the direct paradigm. This interpretation is undoubtedly valid for occasional collaborating teachers at LPU-COE.

Not so for the permanent staff of this Language Policy Unit, whom Maurer shows, throughout the first chapter of Maurer & Puren 2019[26] , are all, from the time of the CEFR's development right up to the present day, members of the two private bodies that have *de facto* taken total and permanent control of the LPU-COE: the *Cambridge English Language Assessment* and the Eurocentres Foundation. He can thus assert, without fear of contradiction:

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[26] The sub-headings of the 1st chapter of this 1e part (1.1 "Actors and authors of the Companion Volume") speak for themselves: 1.1.1 "À la manœuvre, des organismes prétendument désintéressés". 1.1.2 "Le contrôle éditorial de quelques personnels de ces institutions". 1.1.3 "Consultation, piège à con... sentiment".

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> *Behind the mask of the CEFR are private players, clearly identifiable if you take the trouble to look, who have been shaping language teaching in Europe to their own advantage since 2001, by infiltrating the UPL-C0E.* (pp. 7-8).

For these private players, locking the evaluation system into the paradigm of immediacy offers two decisive advantages:

–This assessment system is exactly what can be assessed in the individual certifications they market. The particularity of these certifications, indeed their very objective, is to provide assessors with a "snapshot", a photograph *im–mediate* of learners' language competences; in both senses of the qualifier, i.e., by means of an extrapolation made from performances achieved (1) on the spot, without delay, in an (2) unmediated way, with no other intermediary between them and the language to be produced, than the supports and instructions of the assessment device alone.

–This postulate is all the more difficult to criticize in the CEFR and the CV, even if the descriptors of their level scales are clearly inspired by it, since their authors repeatedly state that they do not wish to impose any methodological guidelines. But what they present as a desire to respect the freedom and responsibility of those involved[27] and a measure of scientific prudence[28] is in reality only intended to maintain maximum open access to this market for their certifications, because they can thus claim that they are valid whatever the audience, objectives, methodologies and traditions of school language teaching in all European countries and beyond.[29]

It is therefore easy to understand why these authors:
> –their interest in not integrating assessment into the complex teaching-learning process, as it should be, but instead reducing it to their unique assessment model;

> –their insistence throughout the years 2000-2010 on promoting the idea that the action-oriented perspective is simply an extension of the communicative approach, despite the evidence, with the help of blind or complicit educationalists[30];

> –their reluctance to propose evaluation grids focusing on plurilingual and pluricultural competences... because they would necessarily also have to be pluri-methodological, at least if they also took teaching-learning into account[31];

> –or their interest in continuing to restrict the criteria for assessing the reading of literary texts, because taking into account suitable criteria would force them to model themselves on a pre-communicative methodology centred on reading comprehension, i.e. active

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[27] For example: "Let's be clear: this is not about telling practitioners what to do and how to do it. We raise questions, not provide answers. The function of the *Common European Framework of Reference* is not to prescribe the objectives its users should pursue or the methods they should use" (CEFR, p. 4).

[28] E.g.: "At present, there is no consensus based on sufficiently solid research on this issue for the Framework itself to be based on any learning theory." (CEFR, p. 108) For three other such statements in this document (with "currently", "not yet", "to date", relating respectively to theories of language competence, didactic universals and grammar), and their analysis as representative of the authors' scientistic ideology, cf. Puren 2015f-en, p. 11.

[29] This undoubtedly explains the choice of the tourist trip as the reference macro-situation for the Threshold Levels, which were then, as they are now, the most common situations of first contact with foreigners; far more common, in particular, than business trips.

[30] The authors of the CV have inaugurated another highly original strategy, which consists of recognizing the break with the past implied by the action-oriented perspective (see section "Implementing the action-oriented approach", pp. 27-28)... without actually incorporating this perspective into the descriptors of their grid complements or new grids.

[31] The entire 2020f article argues the need for a multi- or plurimethodological approach.

methodology, as the designers of the reading comprehension tests in the PIRLS assessment and the PISA survey have undoubtedly done without knowing it[32].

Along with a growing number of other educationalists over the years, I have repeatedly criticized the vagueness and inconsistencies of the CEFR descriptors in my lectures and articles –in particular, the lack of consistency in the criteria from one level to the next (see Maurer & Puren 2019 for an analysis of the "General Reading Comprehension" grid, p. 62). However, descriptors are of no importance to certification bodies, for whom they are merely "loss-leaders". In fact, these bodies do not base their certification tests on descriptors, but on items calibrated from previous test corrections, which they carefully guard in the same way as companies guard their trade secrets. If teachers had access to these items, they would not be able to use them anyway, because they do not master the highly complex statistical procedures required to process responses.

All criticism of the CEFR descriptors thus reinforces the deception that they are important, and that if they were more precise and coherent, they would make it possible to develop truly objective tests, criteria and correction guides. I admit to having unknowingly played, along with others (which is no excuse...) the role of "useful idiot" in the service of the interests of organizations marketing their CEFR-labeled certifications, and in the service of their strategy of replacing national examinations with their international certifications. Indeed, this is one of the conclusions Bruno Maurer and I draw from our research and analysis in our joint 2019 book:

> *When the authors of the CEFR invite teachers to use these descriptors to create their own tests, it's a real smoke-and-mirrors strategy: neither teachers nor inspectors actually have the means or the technical competences, which will "logically" lead education managers to turn to organizations with experience in the field. One might even wonder whether the mediocrity of the proposed descriptors is not part of a deliberate strategy designed to protect a market that has been created by proposing a "European Framework of Reference for International Language Certification", which should be the true title of the CEFR*. (p. 77)

The two ways out of the CEFR that we propose in our book are consistent with our criticisms of the mono-methodological reference of the CEFR and CV competence descriptors, namely the communicative approach and its paradigm of immediacy, as well as the decoupling, imposed by these authors to promote their certifications *urbi et orbi*, between assessment and the teaching-learning process: (4e part) of an "integrated assessment" and (5e part) of a "plurilingual methodology integrated" with this process in a resolutely plurimethodological perspective.

Reflection on evaluation in DLC needs to be relaunched on sound foundations, i.e. "didactic" in the sense that this term now has, which concerns the teaching-learning relationship. Contrary to what certification bodies have been trying to impose on us for a quarter of a century, we need to start again by asking ourselves questions about:

–what not to evaluate;

–which should not be evaluated by a grade or a score, but in the form of a qualitative assessment;

–what each learner needs to assess individually;

–what needs to be collectively self-assessed by groups of learners;

–what needs to be assessed by the teacher;

–what needs to be evaluated by the educational institution;

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[32] Cf. Maurer & Puren 2019, chap. 3.4 "La littérature et les "réactions à la littérature", pp. 132-140.

–which, in the context of educational projects open to outside society, must be evaluated by members of that society.

Standardized assessments of learner output –PIRLS and PISA for mother tongues[33]– have already arrived on the international market, and are in the process of establishing themselves, as a means of evaluating the functioning and effectiveness of the school system –and thus, in part, the teachers themselves. The design of their tests –for the moment limited, in the case of languages, to reading comprehension alone– is far more elaborate than those of the CEFR and CV, which appear simplistic and obsolete alongside them, not least because the former are process-oriented, and not, like the latter, product-oriented (cf. Puren & Maurer 2019, p. 5, pp. 32-33 and pp. 64-66). Didactic reflection on these new assessments is indispensable and urgent, because they are a source of innovation, but also of danger, for decades to come.

So, in this article, in response to a request from the LEND association, I have once again played the useful idiot by repeating certain critical analyses of the CEFR and CV grids. I hope, however, that I have done so in a way that is more useful to my readers than to the authors of these two documents, which, especially if we are content to criticize them without proposing any alternatives, only serve to restrict the conception of assessment, sterilize didactic reflection and block the evolution of the discipline.

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[33] Cf. final bibliography. PISA is scheduled to be extended to foreign languages in 2024.

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