A Review of Role Shifts among China's Secondary School EFL Teachers from a Social-constructivist Perspective

Xiongyong Cheng

School of Foreign Languages, Henan University of Technology, 450001 Lianhua Avenue, Zhengzhou High & New-tech Industries Development Zone, China

Abstract—Teacher development has been a focus of innovation in China's English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction with much attention given to teachers' professional promotion, which is aimed at rendering students' enhancement in learning. With the emphasis on facilitating learner autonomy and lifelong education in recent reform efforts, it has become significant that students should try to self-control their learning and become more active thinkers and problem-solvers. To ensure learner-centered EFL instruction, teachers have to highlight the development of students' independence and autonomy by re-orienting their roles from knowledge disseminators to organizers, partners, consultants, and facilitators. As such, the current paper raises concerns about the review of secondary school EFL teacher roles in China from the perspective of social constructivism which encourages language teachers to interact with their students and help them to apply the language themselves instead of only providing them with the language knowledge. At this point, language teachers are really mediators rather than knowledge–givers. Hopefully, this review paper would contribute to the shift of today's EFL teacher roles in China from disseminators or knowledge-givers to mediators of students' language learning for the further sake of providing reference evidence for policy makers, curriculum developers, and educators in this regard.

Index Terms—secondary school, EFL, role, mediator, constructivism

I. INTRODUCTION

This review is aimed at surveying the body of literature available related to the role scopes of secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in China, involving seven sections in all. The first section concerns the background elucidation of teacher role shifts in China's secondary schools. The second is concerned with the review of teacher roles in China's history. The third centers on EFL instruction in China, on the basis of which the roles of EFL teachers in China's EFL teaching context are reviewed as a fourth section. The subsequent two sections attempt to look at the literature on Feuerstein's (1980)12 mediated learning experience parameters incorporated into Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development for the sake of profound comparison between mediators and non-mediators and the discussion of teachers' roles as well prior to a conclusion drawn in the final section.

II. BACKGROUND

Conventionally, China's education system is governed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), where high schools are categorized into junior and senior levels with three grades in each level (Li, 2004). Junior secondary education is compulsory prior to non-compulsory senior period (MOE, 2001). An underlying framework of China's current secondary education system is shown in Table 1. Currently, only 40 percent of China's junior high students attend by examination senior high schools beyond the 9-year compulsory education, and the entrance examination to key senior middle schools is keenly competitive (Education in China, 2005). The tertiary education sector is also competitive in that the proportion of China's college-age population in higher education has reached only about 35 percent now (Education in China, 2005). In this case, secondary school teachers consider striving to equip their students with sufficient competence needed for the matriculation examinations to senior high schools and colleges/universities as their primary teaching target (Ng & Tang, 1997). The pressure that students encounter from future entrance examinations limits youngsters' English learning to concentrating solely on discrete-point grammatical rules and memory of linguistic knowledge rather than English skills and abilities (Tseng, 1999).

Under such circumstances and conditions, young high school students in China hold competitive attitudes towards learning on account of the pressure from the entrance examination (Chen, 2005). In most cases, these students are conservative and tend to study individually for fear that their peers will surpass them in the competition for higher education (Hsieh, 2003, cited in Chen, 2005). They are unwilling to collaborate with their peers in learning, so it seems toughly challenging for EFL teachers to encourage their students to learn interactively from each other in the language classroom (Chen, 2005). Consequently, the teachers have to teach what is tested, and they would learn what is

examined only (Kang & Wang, 2003). Educational authorities and schools tend to evaluate teachers' work chiefly with reference to their individual students' average scores in examinations (Kang & Wang, 2003).

TABLE 1
BASIC FRAMEWORK OF CHINA'S CURRENT SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Grade	Structure	Note
	College/University Matriculation Examination	
Sr. 3 Sr. 2 Sr. 1	Key Senior Middle School Common Senior Middle School Technical School	Non-Compulsory Education Period
	Streaming Examination for Senior Middle School or Technical School	
Jr. 3 Jr. 2 Jr. 1	Junior Middle School	Compulsory Education Period

Note. Adapted from the published article "Statistics education for junior high schools in China" by Li Jun, 2004, p. 219.

China's new *National Standards of English Curriculum for Basic Education* (hereafter as *Curriculum*) was generated on the basis of multiple intelligences theory and social constructivism (Gardner, 1993). Multi-intelligences view that "learners individually possess diverse learning styles and intelligences" (Ediger, 2000, p. 35), and social constructivism "provides various ways to access the students' multiple intelligences" (Teague, 2000, p. 9). The establishment of the new *Curriculum* seems necessary since "the current situation of English education still does not meet needs of the economic and social development" (MOE, 2001, p. 2). As such, in the course of the execution of the *Curriculum*, EFL teachers are requested to take note of the following instructional principle shifts to change "the notions and behaviors of learning for students and teaching for teachers" (National Curriculum, 2000, p. 18):

- Curriculum contents: shift from systematic presentation of individual disciplines and excessive emphasis on traditional knowledge to looser integration among modern society; technological development and the learners' life;

- Curriculum evaluation: shift from excessive emphases on memorization of facts and competitive examinations to the integrated assessment to dual focus not only on the outcomes but also on the learners' development and teaching improvement; and

- Curriculum management: shift from highly centralized to a shared management with responsibilities distributed among the nation, localities and schools. (pp. 5-6)

The above shift transformations of the new *Curriculum* seem to bring about teacher role shift "from subject-centered, teacher-centered to student's development-centered, and shift from one-way of knowledge to the all-round development including value and attitude" (National Curriculum, 2000, p. 7).

III. TEACHER ROLES IN CHINA'S HISTORY

China experienced over 30 dynasties in its history during which education began more than 2,000 years ago with a renowned philosopher and educator named Confucius (551-479 B.C.), who "made learning a lifelong practice and pursuit for personal cultivation for both knowledge and moral behavior" (Zeng, 2005, pp. 17-18). Teacher roles in China from Confucius' era to present are twofold, namely, the role as an educator responsible for educating students and the role as a governmental recommender in terms of ethic matters of society (Zeng, 2005). Since then, teaching has been a traditional professional career hierarchized with a high position and thus respected by the society (Zeng, 2005). Social values rooted in Confucian philosophy determined that the teacher role was aimed at making society in good order and harmonious as well as trying to lead other people in relieving their hardships (Kim, 1999, cited in Zeng, 2005). The teacher role was also to help young learners become well-behaved and cultured by cultivating their "qualities of *ren (2)* (humaneness), *yi (4)* (righteousness), *li (3)* (ceremony and courtesy), *zhi (4)* (wisdom and intelligence), and *xin (4)* (faithfulness and loyalty to parents and superiors, and trust to friends)", which were crucial to the construction of harmonious society (Zeng, 2005, p. 19).

Confucius, however, failed to be conscious of the value of productivity and innovation since he conceptualized a teacher as a knowledge-transmitter by claiming that "I have transmitted what was taught to me without making up anything of my own" and that "I have been faithful to and loved the Ancients" (Waley, 1938, p. 123). This traditional notion has tremendously affected China's education for over 2,500 years as regards curriculum designs, textbook application, teaching methods, and teacher roles (Zeng, 2005).

Xun Zi (298-238 B.C.), a scholar and philosopher in the Warring States Period, followed Confucian philosophy and emphasized the dignity of teachers who were absolute authorities in the presence of students who had to behave as told to, to build up a close relationship with teachers, and to respect their teachers by looking them up as their own family seniors (Zeng, 2005).

Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C.), another Confucian educator and philosopher of China's Han dynasty, developed Confucian education ideas and put more emphasis on the importance of teachers' dignity, so he was known as the most representative thinker inheriting Confucius in China's history (Jiao, 1976). He improved the Confucian ethical norm and established *Three Cardinal Guides* with reference to which the prince is the guide of his ministers with the father as

the guide of his sons and the husband being the guide of his wife (Zeng, 2005). This resulted in a popular saying that "if one serves as your teacher for only one day, he will serve as your father your entire life", which was bound to raise the social hierarchy of the teacher role (Zeng, 2005, p. 24). Dong's three cardinal guides were incorporated into Confucius' five qualities *ren(2), yi(4), li(3), zhi(4),* and *xin(4)* of being a gentleman, constituting *san(1)gang(1) wu(3)chang(2)* (three guides and five qualities) in Chinese terms which have dominated Chinese people's moral criteria for more than 2000 years (Jiao, 1976; Li, 1991; Waley, 1938; Zeng, 2005). In concurrent educational practices, teachers were greatly affected by this notion because they were looked on as the "shapers of mind" (Watson, 1963, cited in Zeng, 2005, p. 22).

Some other influential scholars such as Mencius (372-289 B.C.), Han Yu (768-824 A.D.), Zhu Xi (1130-1200 A.D.), and Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) held different perspectives on teacher roles, but they shared the same assumption that "teachers should be masters of the classics, experts in ritual, and be imbued with profound knowledge themselves" (Zeng, 2005, p. 24).

During the period between the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and China's implementation of the reform and opening policy (1949-1978), teacher roles were still traditional since teachers were spoon-feeders of knowledge whose students were "containers" or "warehouses" accepting knowledge (Lewin, Little, Xu, & Zheng, 1994, p. 170). Thereafter, Tai (2003) summarized some new terms concerning teacher roles emerging during this phase, but people normally cared about their positive meanings only and neglected their limitations:

- "the engineer of human souls", strengthening the teacher's role to shape students' souls but neglecting that teachers' souls should be purified first,

- "the pedagogue", emphasizing knowledge transmitting but neglecting students' dynamic creativity,

- "the knowledge authority", centering on respecting teachers but ignoring the interaction with students,

- "a bucket of water", emphasizing that the teacher first has "a bucket of water" in storage (metaphorically imparting knowledge) before giving students "a cup of water" but neglecting that the teacher's knowledge also needs updating,

- "a candle", metaphorically sacrificing themselves to enlighten students but overlooking the teacher's exhaustion of knowledge resources,

- "the gardener", pruning but treating students as living plants without thinking,

- "a human ladder", paving the way for students to succeed in exams but failing to cultivate students' creativity and imagination. (cited in Zeng, 2005, pp. 44-45)

In 1978, China hoped to realize the four modernizations of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology by the end of 2000 (Lam, 2002). Until 1983, Deng Xiaoping (1983), chairman of the then Chinese Communist Party, proposed that "education should be geared to modernization, the world, and the future" (p. 109, cited in Zeng, 2005, p. 56), which soon became the leading principle for the educational reform. Since then, all the society has stressed creativity and innovation since teachers as professional practitioners must create and innovate inherently (Yang, 2003). With the development of later reforms in EFL instruction, teacher roles in China have been required to be shifted gradually from traditional instructors to assessors, helpers, researchers, organizers, participants, tutors, facilitators, prompters, mediators, and so on (Fu, 2003; Harmer, 2001; MOE, 2001).

IV. EFL TEACHING IN CHINA

EFL teaching has a history of over 100 years in China which has boasted one of the largest populations of EFL learners internationally so far (Ye, 2007; Zhang, 2008). In the past 30 years, sufficient emphasis has been laid on EFL instruction in China, which is probably attributed to the open-door policy to the outside world (Xu, 2006). In 1957, for example, there were only 843 secondary school EFL teachers in China, but in the 1990s more than 310,400 (Ross, 1992). Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) assert that "the Chinese view English primarily as a necessary tool which can facilitate access to modern scientific and technological advances and secondarily as a vehicle to promote commerce and understanding between the PRC [People's Republic of China] and countries where English is a major language" (p. 466). By 1982, EFL was greatly valued and promoted as the most fundamental among different foreign languages being taught in China (Lam, 2002), and it became a compulsory subject from primary schools to colleges and universities (Zhang, 2008).

EFL instruction begins with Standard Three as an elective; primary and secondary school students are required to have at least four class hours of EFL learning per week (MOE, 2001). To date, EFL has become one of the three main compulsory subjects (i.e., Chinese, English, and mathematics) in the high school curriculum (MOE, 2001; Zhang, 2008). Statistically, over one quarter of the Chinese population at present are learning EFL, and likely, Chinese EFL learners will surpass the English-speaking population in the coming few years (Liu & Teng, 2006, cited in Zhang, 2008).

Historically, the first national syllabus on EFL teaching for secondary schools in China was introduced after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) to enhance students' reading and self-learning abilities (Ng & Tang, 1997). The underlying skills of the language such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing were improved for the potential political reform and further study (Fu, 1986). The syllabus was then revised in April, 1981, in which students learned the four basic language skills, but reading was specially emphasized (Ng & Tang, 1997). The textbook *English* published twice by the People's Education Press in 1977 and 1982 based on the syllabi attempted to move away from the traditional grammar-translation approach (Ng & Tang, 1997).

In 1993, another revision was made to the syllabus for the purpose of teaching EFL in high schools as "training of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills among students to enable them to acquire the foundation of the English language and to use English for communication" (China's State Education Development Commission [SEDC, the predecessor of MOE] 1993, p. 1). Concurrently, the People's Education Press published two sets of official textbooks: *Junior English for China* for junior high school students and *Senior English for China* for seniors in collaboration with the British Longman Group Limited for enhancing students' communicative and expressive competence in the real life setting (Liao, 2003).

In 2001, the MOE introduced the new *Curriculum*, and secondary school EFL teachers were required to apply task-based language teaching (TBLT) (MOE, 2001). Two editions of the *Curriculum*-based textbooks for senior high school students were introduced in succession throughout China, that is, the newly-edited *Senior English for China* in 2003 (Senior English for China [SEFC], 2003) and *New Senior English for China* in 2007 with major changes in each of the new editions (New Senior English for China [NSEFC], 2007). However, there were four editions of the textbook series *Project English* for juniors during 2004-2008 based on the *Curriculum* with minor changes, linking up well any edition of the senior series (Beijing Ren'ai Education Research Institute [BRERI], 2008).

The 1993 *National English Syllabus* is rooted in communicative language instruction philosophy focusing on needs and techniques (Ng & Tang, 1997), claiming that "the teacher's role should be a facilitator and helper to guide students to develop good and effective learning habits" (SEDC, 1993, p.7). Then, the 2001 *Curriculum* underscores the importance of EFL teachers' roles such as mediator, facilitator, partner, consultant, and reflective practitioner in view of the theoretical characteristics of TBLT (MOE, 2001; SEFC, 2003).

SEDC/MOE can decide the goals, objectives, curricula, syllabi, and textbooks throughout the country since China's education system is characterized by high centralization (Yu, 2001). As Liao (2003) and Yu (2001) put it, this sort of intervention from top to bottom plays an important part in stimulating EFL teachers to conform to prescribed teaching roles in the language class. However, numerous studies have revealed that the spirit of the 2001 national *Curriculum* for secondary schools has not really been put into effect and that EFL teachers' elementary goal of preparing students for various public exams and role as knowledge-giver or transmitter through grammar-translation have remained unchanged (e.g., Le & He, 2007; Qiao, 2008; Zhang, 2007).

As a matter of fact, most secondary school EFL teachers in China have noted that their students have encountered many barriers as regards speaking and writing in EFL (Kang & Wang, 2003). This case seems to be attributed to the insufficiency of appropriate proper teaching strategies utilized in EFL instruction classrooms (Ng & Tang, 1997). Most probably, it gets rooted in the deficiency of studies with respect to teacher roles (Leng, 1997). Now that there does exist a gap between the MOE requests and EFL teachers' classroom practices respecting teaching roles, the current research study attempts to bridge the gap in the emerging literature concerning the extent of teachers' adherence to MOE requests in EFL teaching and learning.

V. TEACHER ROLES IN CHINA'S EFL TEACHING CONTEXT

Historically, China is an authoritarian state, whose classrooms are greatly influenced by the Confucian stratified social hierarchy characterized with teacher-centeredness, textbook-centeredness, and grammar-centeredness (Liao, 2003). Therefore, classrooms in China have been dominated by teachers for a long time who are always standing and talking in front of the blackboard with students sitting in lines and rows to listen and take synchronous notes meanwhile (Sun, 2005). The absence of a teacher role as the authority seems inconceivable in China's classrooms (Medgyes, 1986). In such a context, students are too apt to view teachers as the main source of knowledge information and are used to speech-dominated instruction (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

The grammar-translation (GT) approach, the earliest method EFL teachers employed in China, focused literally on grammar education by means of translation and interpretation of rule after rule (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, more and more Chinese students are gradually accustomed to this instructional approach and commence to feel strong interest in learning EFL grammar since the vast majority of them hold a view that if they understand this system, it would help them apply EFL more effectively and efficiently (Harvey, 1985).

Another instructional method utilized after the GT counts as the direct method, viewing language as a habitual skill or technique to be achieved by continuous repetition and imitation (Ye, 2007). The implementation effect of the direct method is even more outstanding in small classes, which seems comparatively adaptable to EFL novices but inappropriate in populous China (Ye, 2007). In actual fact, in the process of execution, the role of the EFL teacher in the class does not seem to alter dramatically in comparison with the teacher as knowledge transmitter only in the above-mentioned GT.

Early in the 1990s, the communicative language teaching (CLT) method was formally introduced to China, aiming to stimulate young EFL learners to utilize language as a medium in communication (Ye, 2007; Yu, 2001). As such, teachers are in a position to foster learners' comprehensive EFL skills in addition to the cultivation of their competence of applying these skills in authentic settings (Ye, 2007). Galloway (1993) contends that the CLT approach could help learners relieve their tense mood in respect to the outcomes of class activities leading to different reactions and responses. In the CLT process, teachers readily play the roles of adviser, facilitator, and co-communicator facilitating communication in English, monitoring student performance, and undertaking communicative activities together with

their students (Johnson & Morrow, 1981). In accordance with Ye (2007), CLT implementation might be constrained by numerous factors, the two of which are (a) that the textbook designed for CLT destroys the integrity of EFL and increases students' difficulty in learning EFL; and (b) that the teacher role played in the process is challenging to evaluate.

In the last few decades, the emerging audio-lingual approach has come to EFL teachers' classrooms, which lays more emphasis on students' listening and speaking with the help of teachers' underlying interpretations of sentence patterns and attempting to avoid the native language (Ye, 2007). In this case, the EFL teacher in class performs the organizer of students' mechanical imitation activities rather than the cultivation of EFL skills, therefore causing the insufficiency of students' flexibility in learning and competence of reading and writing (Ye, 2007).

While the various teacher roles in the said approaches are all implemented to different extents in today's EFL classrooms in China, but most teachers prefer the grammar-translation strategy, for any attempt for interactions in the class from EFL teachers like pair-work, group-work, team-work, game-plays, and some other communicative tasks would run the risk of resistance or even resentment from the side of students (Chen, 2005). A lot of EFL teachers have tried to change their previous dominant processes in class, but they still fail due to frustration, losing their initiatives and rather acquiescing to traditional practices (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). Teachers proceed to experience the conventional GT approach generating the typical environment of keen competition in lieu of cooperation so that low-achievers would be left behind eventually (Richards & Rodgers, 2000).

VI. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social constructivism as a ground theory in education has developed in the past few decades (Teague, 2000). Gergen (1995) asserts that all knowledge ought to be constructed via social interaction in the module of social constructivism. Any more competent person could transmit knowledge information to somebody else, and effective language learning could also be processed at this very moment because participants concerned are involved in constructing knowledge via interaction (Gergen, 1995). "Mediation theory has played a central role in social constructivist framework" (Sun, 2005, p. 6), typically defined as the demonstration of humans' cognitive process for the sake of revealing the relationship between people and their community (Tocalli-Beller, 2003). Donato and McCormick (1994) claim that mediation has two forms: (a) One is called artifact mediation concerned with teaching materials, and (b) the other is named social mediation and characterized by the spoken and written structure of language, chances for interactive activities, and help from the teacher and more capable peers. Social mediation is viewed as the core of the research concerning mediative interactions (Gibbons, 2003), which determines the effectiveness of learning through social interactive activities between different people in knowledge and competence (Vygotsky, 1978). In the language classroom, the teacher with the most knowledge plays the role to find ways to help learners reach higher levels of knowledge and competence by engaging in joint efforts and interacting with learners instead of following curriculum guidelines only (Williams & Burden, 2000).

Primarily, social constructivism is grounded on the works of Vygotsky and Feuerstein, which have a few central tenets involving the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and mediative conception (Lantolf, 2000). "Although these ideas are only just beginning to be applied in a systematic way to language teaching, there is considerable accumulating evidence from a vast number of studies in general and special education to enable us to conclude that their influence can be both powerful and profound" (Williams & Burden, 2000, p. 84). As such, the two grand theories inform the basic research questions of and are of interest to the present study.

A. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism

Vygotsky's ZPD is viewed as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and level of potential development as determined through solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86). In the language classroom, teaching in the ZPD can offer learners adequate interactive opportunities for their development through the zone with the help guided, which establishes learners' intellectual powers in this learning atmosphere (Oxford, 1997). At the commencement of a learning procedure, teachers assume most of the task prior to both of them undertaking cooperative responsibility (Schunk, 2000). Gradually, teachers reduce assistance as scaffolding till students can execute the learning task alone and get through their ZPD eventually (Campione, Brown, Ferrara, & Bryant, 1984). However, the implementation of the ZPD seems difficult to handle in the language classroom compared with Feuerstein's mediative tools as illustrated in the subsequent section.

B. Feuerstein's Mediation Review

Feuerstein (1980) compares the concept of mediator with a narrower view of the teacher as disseminator of information from four perspectives: (a) mediation relating to helping students learn autonomously and consider and address problems independently by controlling their own learning, (b) learners as active participants in the process of mediation involving interaction between mediator and learner, (c) reciprocation occurring in mediation, and (d) the mediator needing to urge learners to interact with accessible materials alone by each possible means until they are capable of true self-direction by reminding them "to note that learner autonomy involves more than the provision of

suitable self-access materials" (cited in Williams & Burden, 2000, p. 68). For this sake, Feuerstein (1980) produces a program concerning teaching students learning strategies with the name Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) where Feuerstein proposes 12 parameters as indispensable criteria for evaluating the quality of MLE interaction: significance, purpose beyond the here and now, shared intention, a sense of competence, control of own behavior, goal-setting, challenge, awareness of change, a belief in positive outcomes, sharing, individuality, and a sense of belonging (pp. 289-290).

The child's cognitive development is derived from social interactions with adults or peers and occurs in the ZPD referring to the gap between the child's present developmental level and those higher levels that might be arrived at, which Vygotsky terms the actual and potential levels respectively (Seng, Pou, & Tan, 2003). The actual level is constructed based on cognitive understanding, whereas the potential level relies upon external modification through targeted mediation (Seng et al., 2003). Vygotsky, however, neglects to delineate in detail the specific procedures applied by fostering children to internalize the mental tools provided by adults or more competent peers (Seng et al., 2003). Kozulin and Presseisen (1995) think that "Vygotsky made no attempt to elaborate the activities of human mediators beyond their function as vehicles of symbolic tools", which "left considerable lacunae in Vygotsky's theory of mediation" (p. 69, cited in Seng et al., 2003, p. 87). One response to these lacunae, specific to the situation of mediation, can be found in Feuerstein's MLE (1980), in which the 12 mediative criteria might help identify the traits of social interaction that facilitate cognitive change (Seng et al., 2003).

As a result, the application of Feuerstein's mediation theory incorporated into the ZPD is expected to be the strongest rationale to conduct teachers' role as mediator as students' facilitation is the target of education (MOE, 2001). At this point, it seems meaningful for the ZPD and Feuerstein's mediation to be applied together for the most persuasive justifications of this study.

C. Teacher as Mediator

Mediators do not determine who is right or wrong, but rather help participant sides reach their own agreements by creating constructive space for jointly checking underlying individual interests (e.g., needs, hopes, concerns, and desires), generating relevant information, forming options, and making options (Gay, 2000). In this event, if applicable, teachers should play organizers and mediators of cultures and conductors of the social environment for learning (Gay, 2000). Thus, successful mediators can help students to link novel messages to their personal experiences as well as to learning in relation to other areas and come to understand what they should conduct while puzzled (Tinzmann et al., 1990). Eventually, students' maximal potentials for self-regulation learning are to be facilitated for the future autonomous learning strategies (Tinzmann et al., 1990).

Concurrently, students should also realize their roles' shift appropriate to the mediative classroom due to the adjustment of the teacher's role. As Tinzmann et al. (1990) observe,

Their [students'] major roles are collaborators and active participators. It is useful to think how these new roles influence the processes and activities students conduct before, during, and after learning. For example, before learning, students set goals and plan learning tasks; during learning, they work together to accomplish tasks and monitor their progress; and after learning, they assess their performance and plan for future learning. As a mediator, the teacher helps students fulfill their new roles. (sec. 3)

Apparently, it is a trend for teachers' role to be changed from being an instructor to becoming a constructor, facilitator, coach, and creator of learning environments (Teachers' Role, 2007). It is insufficient for the teacher to transmit only content knowledge to students, but they are also responsible for students' higher cognitive skill levels, enhancement of information literacy, and their collaborative working practices (Teachers' Role, 2007). As such, today's teachers are required to be efficient, open-minded, and critical mediators between students and their indispensable perception (Teachers' Role, 2007).

VII. DISCUSSION OF TEACHERS' ROLES

In view of the need to compare the mediator role and other teacher roles, the operational definition of *traditional teachers* is drawn on, representing non-mediators in this study, and non-mediators' instruction is also operationally defined as teaching traditionally. EFL teacher roles at issue are thus discussed in the following account.

The above review seems to verify that the scope of teacher roles has been widened since more and more research has been showing interest in what the teacher should do in the language classroom (Sun, 2005). "Mediators not only concern the subject matter, the methodology, and techniques, but also concern the most important aspect of the teaching and learning process: the learners" (p. 23). Teacher roles such as helper, counselor, designer, involver, and enabler can be embraced by the role of mediator in essence since mediators not only teach learners but also help them to self-regulate their learning, to set their own goals, to monitor their strategies, to involve students in activities, and to enable them to be independent and confident learners (Brook & Brook, 1993). Table 2 serves to summarize the differences between traditional teaching roles and the teacher as mediator.

TABLE 2
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL TEACHERS AND MEDIATORS

Traditional Teacher	Mediator
The term "student" is often used.	The term "learner" is often used.
Teachers are the leaders of students.	Mediators are collaborators with learners about their language learning.
The teaching process is predetermined.	There is a negotiated and flexible pathway.
Teachers teach students from prescribed textbooks.	Mediators orientate learners to authentic materials.
Teachers are assessors of their students.	Mediators discuss with learners different ways to self-monitor their learning progress.
Teachers are instructors or organizers.	Mediators are reflective listeners.
Teachers monitor a whole class and look for common language problems.	Mediators emphasize learners' differences and help them realize learning strategies.
Teachers give the feedback on learning tasks.	Mediators encourage learners to reflect on the outcomes of language learning tasks.
Teachers target only students' outcome in language learning.	Mediators target learners' integral development.
The climate in the language classroom is authoritarian.	The climate in the meditative language classroom is more democratic than authoritarian.
Nearly all teaching activities are teacher-centered.	Activities are either learner-centered or interactive between the mediator and learners.

Note. Adapted from Harmer (2001), Hedge (2002), and Sun (2005).

Since the spirit of the new *Curriculum* is to a great extent based on mediation theory for the sustainable development of learners, the main focus should be on the effective implementation of mediation in the future secondary school EFL classrooms (MOE, 2001; Sun, 2005). Throughout the literature available, it is assumed that researchers and educators have conducted a considerable amount of role-related research (e.g., Lamb, 1995; Liao, 2003; Nunan, 1987; Wang, 2002), most of which, however, is concerned with teaching approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT). Secondary school EFL teacher roles have remained traditional in most cases, and mediative classrooms are thus rare in China.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teachers' consciousness of roles is vitally essential in their professional development, so this review paper critically highlights the survey of the body of literature in favor of social constructivism for the purpose of looking at the changing views of teacher roles, from which it seems more challenging for an EFL teacher to help students construct knowledge than to instruct directly. Teachers' roles have changed and will proceed to change to meet new requirements as schools gradually become locations where children learn about the world of work and get prepared for successful citizenship by socializing and collaborating with others around them. Likewise, EFL curriculum and instruction have already been altered since the new *Curriculum* centers on thinking techniques and strategies at higher levels in order to succeed in school and life. The teachers need to be more concerned about the teaching procedure in lieu of learning consequence, to facilitate students' implementation of how to learn instead of only what to learn, and to encourage students to learn creatively rather than adaptively. As such, it is hopefully assumed that this paper could push the present pedagogical transformation all over China by identifying secondary school EFL teachers' execution of mediation functions for the further sake of theoretical verification of students' quality-oriented development. This conduct thus seems to adapt to the cutting-edge rationale that teacher roles are viewed as vitally fundamental issues to be resolved regardless of whatever educational potentials, settings, and problems since teachers are decision-makers in tackling the class process.

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Xiongyong Cheng was born in Xinyang, China in 1966. He is an associate professor in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the School of Foreign Languages, Henan University of Technology, China. His primary research interests are EFL testing and assessment in relation to classroom instruction. He holds an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Henan Normal University, China, and a PhD in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from the University of Malaya, Malaysia.

His current research interests encompass EFL teaching, inter-cultural communication, teacher education, professional development, and the evaluation of curriculum implementation. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cheng was awarded the honor title "National Excellent Education Gardener" by the Ministry of Education of China in 1993.