

Knowledge of Mediation and Its Implementation among Secondary School EFL Teachers in China

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Abstract—This paper concerns China's secondary school EFL teachers' knowledge of mediation and their classroom practices to explore why mediative classrooms are so rare and what can be done to make a classroom more mediative. To provide a general picture of EFL teachers' knowledge and execution of mediation, a methodological triangulation (i.e., questionnaire, observation, and interviewing) is employed for the data collection. The research findings indicate that most EFL teachers in China have no knowledge of mediation and thus are unable to mediate students' learning. The paper thus tries to reveal reflective implications and positive demonstrations for teacher practitioners by providing reference evidence for policy makers, curriculum developers, and educators.

Index Terms—EFL teacher, mediator, cognition, implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

Mediation theory, located within the framework of social-constructivism, views that all language users begin from birth to build relationships with people around them (Williams & Burden, 2000). Through constant interactions with others, they learn to use language and make sense of the world (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, people around learners act as mediators who "may be the parent, facilitator, teacher, or some significant other who plays the intentional role of explaining, emphasizing, interpreting, or extending the environment so that the learner builds up a meaningful internal model of the context or the world experienced" (Seng, Pou, & Tan, 2003, p. 11). When this occurs in language classrooms, teachers interact with students and help them apply the language themselves instead of only providing them with the language knowledge (Fisher, 2005). With the emphasis on facilitating learner autonomy and life-long education in recent reforms, it has become significant that students self-control their learning and become more active thinkers and problem-solvers (Ting, 1987; Yang, 2003; Ye, 2007). To ensure learner-centered EFL (English as a foreign language) instruction, teachers highlight the development of students' independence and autonomy by re-orienting their roles (Ministry of Education of China [MOE], 2001). The current education context implies that it is necessary for teachers to play the teacher role as mediator instead of as disseminator in the language classroom since the value of adult mediation in children's learning can never be overstressed (Seng et al., 2003). This paper thus concerns China's secondary school EFL teachers' implementation of the mediator role based on the identification of their knowledge of mediation.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

China's new *National Standards of English Curriculum for Basic Education* (hereafter referred to as *Curriculum Standards*) was generated on the basis of multiple intelligences theory and social-constructivism (Fu, 2003; Gardner, 1993; MOE, 2001; Peng, 2005; Tang, 2009; Yang, 2005; Yu, 2005). Multiple intelligences theory holds 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). Now, the implementation of the new *Curriculum Standards* is in process throughout China before another new circle of curriculum reforms for secondary education is made known. The development of the *Curriculum Standards* seems indispensable as "the current situation of English education still does not meet needs of the economic and social development" (MOE, 2001, p. 2).

The *Curriculum Standards* contends that the teacher should no longer be authoritative but become the co-constructor of knowledge with learners (MOE, 2001). Under the new *Curriculum Standards* where the new educational beliefs of humanism and all students' lifelong development are advocated, teachers are considered as the key to the reform (Tang, 2009). Teachers need to care more about the teaching process rather than results, to help students know how to learn instead of only what to learn, and to help students establish creative learning instead of adaptive learning (MOE, 2001). Moreover, MOE can decide the goals, objectives, curricula, syllabi, and textbooks throughout China whose education system is characterized by high centralization (Liao, 2004; Yu, 2001). Nonetheless, numerous researchers and educators have articulated teacher role shifts under the *Curriculum Standards* from the theoretical perspective only (e.g., Fu, 2003; Peng, 2005; Tang, 2009; Yang, 2005; Yu, 2005). They have investigated the application of Feuerstein's (1980) 12 mediated learning experience (MLE) criteria through surveys, reporting that teachers fail to entirely adopt the 12 techniques to "mediate" students' learning. To their thinking, teacher roles required by the *Standards* should be

assessors, helpers, researchers, organizers, participants, tutors, facilitators, and prompters (Harmer, 2001). This kind of shift in teachers' roles foregrounds the role of mediator whose functions encompass those of the above teacher roles (Feuerstein, 1980; Sun, 2005). As such, this study tries to fill the gap in the existing literature on the extent of teachers' adherence to MOE requirements in EFL instruction.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is to probe into the cause of the unpopularity of mediative classrooms in China and what can be done to make a classroom more mediative. To achieve this goal, two questions that follow to be addressed are proposed:

1. What knowledge about mediation do China's secondary school EFL teachers hold?
2. What are EFL teachers' classroom practices in relation to 12 mediation functions?

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review surveys the body of literature informing the two questions, introducing the theoretical structure in light of Feuerstein's 12 MLE features incorporated into Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

A. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism

Vygotsky's famous "Three Principal Assumptions" is known as his greatest contribution to social constructivism (see Vygotsky, 1978). The first assumption is that the community and its internal members or people play a central role by interacting with the individual in that individual's view of the world (Vasireddy, 2007). The second is the assumption that the tools, whose type and quality determine the pattern and speed of cognitive development, are involved in the surrounding culture and language and important adults (Vasireddy, 2007). The ZPD theory is viewed as Vygotsky's third principal assumption, conceptualized 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" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky (1987) argues, "What the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (p. 211).

At the outset of a learning process, the teacher is bound to undertake the majority of the task before the teacher and students assume the collaborative duty (Schunk, 2000). The teacher gradually reduces the help as scaffolding until students can perform on their own since they become more capable (Campione et al., 1984). "The key is to ensure that the scaffolding keeps learners in the ZPD, which is altered as they develop capabilities. Students are challenged to learn within the bounds of the ZPD" (Schunk, 2000, p.245).

B. Feuerstein's Mediation

Not every interaction involving a task, learner, and mediator possesses a quality of MLE, so a system of the MLE criteria is developed to distinguish levels of MLE interactions (Feuerstein, 1980). In the MLE program, Feuerstein proposes 12 parameters as indispensable criteria for evaluating the quality of MLE interaction as shown in Table 1.

Feuerstein (1980) believes that teachers can "mediate" in numbers of different ways. The 12 criteria of the MLE program represent 12 different ways of mediation for the teacher in the language classroom to conduct (Seng et al., 2003). The first "three criteria are also considered *universal*, in the sense that they can be present in all races, ethnic groups, cultural entities, and socioeconomic strata" (Seng et al., 2003, p. 36). By contrast, "the remaining nine criteria are considered responsible for the process of diversification of humankind in terms of cognitive styles, need systems, types of skills mastered, and the structure of knowledge", and "these nine criteria are also considered *situational* because they need not always be present in every MLE" (Seng et al., 2003, p. 36). Given the need of this study, the operational definitions of *universal mediation* and *situational mediation* are drawn on, referring to the first three MLE criteria and the remaining nine respectively.

TABLE 1
REPRESENTATION OF FEUERSTEIN'S MLE CRITERIA

Parameter	Conceptualization
1. Significance	The teacher makes students realize the importance of a learning task so that they can look at the significance of the task to their own and in a broader cultural context.
2. Purpose beyond the here and now	Explains to learners how conducting a learning activity will help them in the future beyond the moment and situation for the time being only.
3. Shared intention	In presenting a task, the teacher must make instructions clear and ensure the intention is understood and reciprocated by learners.
4. A sense of competence	Fosters learners' feelings of competence and capability of learning.
5. Control of own behavior	Encourages students to become autonomous by self-controlling their learning procedure.
6. Goal-setting	Teaches learners how to establish achievable targets and to locate approaches for the purpose of realizing them.
7. Challenge	Helps learners to develop an internal need to confront challenges and to seek for new challenges in life.
8. Awareness of change	Stimulates learners to monitor changes in themselves and to understand the fact that humans are changeable all the time.
9. A belief in positive outcomes	Urges learners to assume that there is always the possibility of finding a solution, even when faced with an apparently intractable problem.
10. Sharing	Invites learners to share behaviors and collaboration among themselves and to perceive that it is advisable for some problems to be addressed collaboratively.
11. Individuality	Helps learners realize their individual characteristics in terms of their unique aspects.
12. A sense of belonging	Aids learners to establish a consciousness of pertaining to the whole class community in the process of the completion of the task.

Note. Adapted from *Instrumental enrichment: An intervention program for cognitive modifiability* by R. Feuerstein, 1980.

C. Missing Link: from Vygotsky to Feuerstein

Vygotsky and Feuerstein seem to facilitate each other in effectively important manners in the case of their works since Vygotsky (1978) utters the ZPD, a location in which the probability of enhancement of a learner's abilities is able to be seen. Lantolf (2000) asserts that the ZPD is where social forms of mediation are performed and realized. Feuerstein's (1980) MLE describes what comes about within the ZPD, which centers on a mediator's helping learners get through this special zone and obtain their competence development in the zone eventually. Once students receive high-quality mediated learning in the school setting, they will have some grasp on how to learn for the future, at least tacitly and imperceptibly (Feuerstein, 1980). Vygotsky believes that human "higher mental processes are functions of mediated activity" (cited in Seng et al., 2003, p. 6), but even then "the role of the human mediator is not fully elaborated within [Vygotsky's] theoretical framework" and that the theoretical gap is thus bridged with the help of "Feuerstein's (1990) theory of mediated learning, which assigns the major role to a human mediator" (Kozulin, 1994, p. 284, cited in Seng et al., 2003, p. 7).

Accordingly, the application of mediation theory incorporated into the ZPD is expected to be the strongest rationale to carry out the teacher role as mediator in that students' facilitation is the target of education (MOE, 2001). At this point, it seems meaningful for the ZPD and mediation theory to be applied together for the most persuasive justifications of this study.

V. DATA COLLECTION

The data sources of this study were derived from the questionnaire survey and case studies in the forms of two-round observations and semi-structured interviews with five self-claimed teachers.

A. Questionnaire

To obtain the data to address the research questions, a questionnaire survey was applied, which was adapted from Williams and Burden's Mediation Questionnaire (2000) testing teachers' classroom practices in the case of Feuerstein's 12 MLE features, together with reference to Liao's Communicative Language Teaching Questionnaire (2003) (see Appendix A). The revised mediation questionnaire contains four question items summarized as shown in Table 2. In view of potential linguistic biases from EFL, a Chinese version questionnaire was employed in the study, subjected to a panel of experts in the Chinese language.

TABLE 2
QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS AND SCOPES

Question	Main Content	Category	Focused Area
Question 1	Asking teachers whether they have idea of mediation.	Open-ended	Cognition
Question 2	Requesting teachers (a) to identify mediators and traditional teachers and (b) to compare their roles with those of the four teachers.	Open-ended	Cognition Behavior
Question 3	Asking teachers to scale their classroom practices.	Likert-type	Behavior
Question 4	Collecting EFL teachers' demographic data.	Closed-ended	Background

Note. Adapted from Williams & Burden's *Mediation Questionnaire* (2000) and Liao's *Communicative Language Teaching Questionnaire* (2003).

B. Observations

A purposive sampling technique was administered as well in this study since five EFL teachers were selected for the

field observations according to their claim in the answered questionnaires that they were mediating the students' learning. The observed teachers got informed that the observation was an observation to recognize what happened in their classroom rather than a performance evaluation (Liao, 2003). They were reminded not to perform differently when their textbook-based lectures were observed which might manifest the requirements of the Curriculum Standards (MOE, 2001; Zhang, 2008). A classroom observation worksheet (see Appendix B) was designed identifying EFL teachers' extent of the execution of the 12 MLE features in the form of Likert-type scale.

In order to gain a true picture of the five self-claimed teachers' classroom instruction, each of them was observed for twice. A skilled technician was employed in charge of video-recording the teacher participants' observed lessons and the interviews with them. In process of the observation, the researcher played the role of non-participant observer (Creswell, 2005). For the purpose of backuping the observation data, the teaching of each of the participants was fully transcribed to identify focal themes after being video-recorded (Zhang, 2008).

C. In-depth Interviews

The interview was seen as an opportunity for the teachers to utter their opinions on issues related to their profession (Liao, 2003), which was also a crucial approach for the researcher to check the accuracy of the impressions that he had gained through the observations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). In the interviewing process, whatever question prompts and suggestive possible answers were averted (Liao, 2003). A face-to-face semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C) was guided by a set of open-ended questions to elicit the answer to the predetermined research questions (Creswell, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Verma & Mallick, 1999). Sufficient attention was focused on formulating interview questions in an open-ended way since loosely structured questions allowed participants more freedom to relate more of what was significant to them (Li, 2004).

To facilitate communication and eliminate any barrier generated by EFL, the participants were interviewed in the Chinese language which is the mother tongue of both the interviewee and the interviewer. All the interviews were video-recorded and then partially transcribed to highlight the important subjects in relation to this study as the interviewing was semi-structured.

VI. SUBJECTS

This study was conducted in Henan province located in eastern central China for the accessible population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). According to Creswell's (2005) rough estimate of a survey sample size, 350 teachers were chosen randomly from 350 secondary schools in Henan. A vital difficulty with the questionnaire survey was that only a small percentage of the pre-sampled respondents tended to answer the questionnaire (Liao, 2003). Out of the 350 distributed questionnaire sheets, 152 effective copies (43.4 %) were returned, but "power is not an issue" since the sample size is larger with 100 or more subjects (Stevens, 1996, p. 6, cited in Pallant, 2007, p. 205).

In the case study, generalization is not the ultimate target to seek for, so there is no need of applying the representative sampling technique (Ary et al., 2006; Creswell, 2005; Stake, 1995). Purposeful sampling seems an ideal alternative which is aimed at discovering, understanding, and obtaining the most effective insights by selecting a non-random sample (Merriam, 1998). Thus, to identify the implementation of EFL teachers' mediative functions, five self-claimed teachers as mediators with respective pseudonyms---Huang, Jiang, Lv, Zeng, and Zhang were sampled purposively for observations and interviewing.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

The data for this study originate from the 152 participating teachers' answered questionnaire sheets, observations, and interviewing. The quantitative data analysis was processed with the help of the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 16.0 for Windows, while the qualitative data were coded and analyzed manually.

VIII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are reported in order of the two research questions in terms of the survey and case studies, followed by the findings discussion related to each of the research questions.

Findings and Discussion for RQ1: What Knowledge about Mediation Do China's Secondary School EFL Teachers Hold?

The questionnaire survey findings indicate that the teacher participants had misconceptions and inadequate knowledge of mediation. Most of the participating teachers incorrectly regarded the role of mediator as the "transmitter" of knowledge from the teacher to students, the "organizer" of the implementation of classroom activities, and the "go-between" between students and teaching materials. Around one third of the participants failed to identify the teacher role in the PPP procedure (i.e., presentation, practice, and production) and mistook the traditional instructor for the role of mediator. Given the four teacher scenarios related to different teaching roles (i.e., 1 universal mediator, 2 situational mediators, and 1 traditional instructor) (see Appendix A), the small minority of the participating teachers seemed clearer about the knowledge of situational mediation than of universal mediation. They claimed to make better sense of situational mediation functions like "control of own behavior", "challenge", "a belief in positive outcomes", "sharing",

and “individuality”, but they had a poor command of “a sense of competence”, “awareness of change”, “goal-setting”, and “a sense of belonging” (see Table 1).

The teacher participants’ misconceptions about mediation are embodied in two aspects. First, the participating teachers considered the role of mediator as the “transmitter” of knowledge, cultures, learning strategies, and learning how to be. The function of the transmitter is to bring knowledge to students directly without any interactions or activities, and the teacher takes charge of the output of knowledge making students the container of knowledge (Fisher, 2005; Hird, 1995). This kind of instructional role is identical with “instructor” which seems like a Chinese equivalent *jiao (1) shu (1) jiang (4)*, in which *jiao (1) shu (1)* represents “instruction” with *jiang (4)* meaning “craftsman”. In addition, the subjects referred to the role of mediator as a “go-between”, implying that the teacher participants seemed to be influenced by the Chinese equivalent *zhong (1) jie (4)*, in which *zhong (1)* means “in-between” with *jie (4)* referring to “medium”. In fact, many previous studies had similar findings to the above (e.g., Fu, 2003; Peng, 2005; Tang, 2009; Yang, 2005; Yu, 2005).

Second, the PPP procedure is characterized by teacher-centeredness and the instruction for accurate language functions, during which the teacher controls the instructional pace completely with students as organisms guided by skilled training techniques to generate correct responses (Nunan, 1989). In particular, the final stage *production* provides real situations for students to produce various forms of spoken and written language products for the free use of language (Ellis, 1992; Liao, 2003). Nevertheless, the teacher role in this procedure is conceptualized as “instructor” since the class is teacher-centered. Many of the participants in the survey wrongly viewed the traditional instructor in the PPP procedure as a mediator, which could be attributed to their insufficient cognition of the PPP procedure.

In the five cases of self-claimed teachers, only one teacher (i.e., Huang) had a clear concept about situational mediation. However, the other four teachers possessed incomplete knowledge of situational mediation functions, and among them, Zhang had no conception of mediation since she conceptualized the role of mediator as the transmitter only (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF MEDIATION OF JIANG, LV, AND ZENG

Mediation Function	Teacher(s) (Who?)
Control of own behavior	Jiang, Lv, Zeng
Goal-setting	Lv, Zeng
Sharing	Jiang, Lv, Zeng
Individuality	Jiang
A sense of belonging	Jiang

On the basis of correct knowledge of situational mediation, Huang was able to implement situational mediation in the class due to favorable attitudes towards mediation and the absence of situational constraints (Mueller, 1986; Oskamp, 1991). Zhang encountered far fewer constraints compared with Jiang, Lv, and Zeng in the classroom practices, but she was unable to refrain from playing the traditional role of instructor because of the incorrect knowledge of mediation despite her positive attitudes towards the role of mediator. As a result, the five self-claimed teachers held distinct levels of mediative knowledge which influenced their behaviors differently since cognition was one of the fundamentals of their implementation of the mediator role (Attitudes, 2008; Mueller, 1986; Oskamp, 1991).

Findings and Discussion for RQ2: What Are EFL Teachers’ Classroom Practices in Relation to 12 Mediation Functions?

Most of the teacher participants in the questionnaire survey argued that they played the roles of situational mediator rather than the universal mediator. Around one third of the participating teachers claimed to play the PPP (presentation, practice, and production) instructor role. Item 3 of the questionnaire had a 5-point Likert-scale to measure the teachers’ assessment on how often they implemented each of the 12 MLE features. The respondents’ mediative behaviors in terms of the 12 statements were measured on a scale of 1 to 5, representing *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, *usually*, and *always* (see Appendix A). The mean scores of the 12 mediation features (marked *b1-b12*), frequencies, standard deviations, and ranking orders (according to *M*) as regards the teacher participants’ behaviors are shown in Table 4, which shows that the means of “a belief in positive outcomes” (1st), “sharing” (2nd), “a sense of competence” (3rd), and “control of own behavior” (4th) are ranked the four highest. By contrast, the scores for the first three features (i.e., universal mediation) are a little lower, in which, “purpose beyond the here and now” (12th) is rated lowest.

Regarding the participants’ mediative practices, it appeared that their own behavioral reports in the survey might be the only evidence before they were observed and interviewed. Most of them claimed to perform situational mediators or play “to some extent” either as they found universal mediation too difficult to implement or as they held no correct knowledge of universal mediation. The teacher participants’ classroom practices were restricted by situational constraints when they attempted to implement the situational mediator role. Though the subjects had no correct knowledge of universal mediation, some of them asserted that they were implementing the universal mediator role. They seemed to conform to social desirability which “is a response set characterized by answering questions in the direction that is most socially accepted, regardless of whether such an answer is actually correct for the response” (Liebert & Liebert, 1995, p. 242). No practitioners like to fall behind as they are urged to administer role shifts in the ongoing curriculum reforms of China.

In the five case studies, Huang was experienced in managing the classroom and had the abilities to involve each of the students in the learning activities. She was encouraging and showed positive attitudes towards teaching her students, acting as the role of mediator in many ways such as helping the students share and develop a sense of belonging and a strong belief in positive outcomes. She also gave more positive feedback rather than criticisms in terms of the students' performance. Huang designed the adequate tasks and activities for the students to participate in by allowing them opportunities for cooperative learning. Meantime, she showed much concern for the individual students and offered them constructive suggestions as well as realistic goals. So Huang played a mediator better than the others. Jiang, Lv, and Zeng held favorable attitudes towards mediation and possessed partial knowledge of mediation, but they were traditional instructors owing to the situational constraints that they encountered. Zhang's misconception of mediation and situational constraints made her go far beyond the execution of the role of mediator though she had positive attitudes towards the role of mediator.

TABLE 4
TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO MEDIATION

Question Item	Frequency					M	SD	Ranking
	1 Never	2 Sometimes	3 Often	4 Usually	5 Always			
b1. Shared intention	1	34	39	58	19	3.40	.994	8 th
b2. Significance	3	40	56	34	18	3.16	1.014	9 th
b3. Purpose beyond the here and now	9	72	30	32	8	2.72	1.034	12 th
b4. A sense of competence	1	20	33	57	40	3.76	1.011	3 rd
b5. Control of own behavior	1	17	35	61	35	3.75	.965	4 th
b6. Goal-setting	2	18	35	64	30	3.68	.973	6 th
b7. Challenge	9	53	40	31	18	2.97	1.131	10 th
b8. Awareness of change	6	60	38	34	13	2.92	1.062	11 th
b9. A belief in positive outcomes	2	8	15	54	72	4.23	.927	1 st
b10. Sharing	1	16	33	58	42	3.83	.981	2 nd
b11. Individuality	2	22	36	54	36	3.67	1.041	7 th
b12. A sense of belonging	2	24	34	40	50	3.75	1.124	5 th

IX. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study show that teachers' poverty of knowledge of mediation prevented them from implementing the role of mediator. Many experts on mediation assert that the execution of the mediator role is extremely challenging to educators (e.g., Bligh, 1971; Feuerstein, 1980; Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1999; Higgins, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Seng et al., 2003; Williams & Burden, 2000). As Seng et al. (2003) put it,

The roles of teachers will have to change dramatically if they are to remain relevant to a new generation of students. The challenge is indeed for educators to design new learning environments and curricula that really encourage motivation and independence to equip students with learning, thinking, and problem-solving skills through good mediation. (p. 17)

EFL teachers therefore have to obtain professional training about mediation in order to perform as real mediators. Given the findings of this study, updating teachers' knowledge of mediation seems to hold great importance.

It is the first time that mediation theory has been put forward in the secondary school *Curriculum Standards* (MOE, 2001). The previous and current research studies have indicated that most EFL teachers have little or no exposure to knowledge of the role of mediation (e.g., Grosser & Waal, 2008; Guo, 2004; Lai, 2004; Sun, 2007; Xu, 2006). For instance, Zeng, in this study, who claimed to have learnt of mediation at university, was unable to implement mediative functions.

In China's educational setting, "it is not only necessary but also crucial in language teacher education programs to be conducted in the EFL context to achieve an understanding of language teachers' knowledge base to get a sense of where they are, to comprehend their teaching context, and to know their professional development needs" (Cheng & Wang, 2004, p. 4). Fisher (2005) has the following account in terms of this "knowledge base":

We know that effective teachers exhibit an impressive range of competencies, including *curriculum knowledge* (the content of teaching), *pedagogical knowledge* (the skills of teaching in theory and application, which include the skills of presentation, organization and management of learning), *psychological knowledge* of children as individuals and *sociological knowledge* of the nature of cultural and social groups. In addition, they need *evaluative skills* to assess children's learning and the effectiveness of their own teaching. (p. 144)

Consequently, *pedagogical knowledge* on the execution of the mediator role seems underscored in the case of teachers' re-training programs at issue in this study. Seng et al. (2003) believe that the research on MLE shows that teachers themselves will turn reflective and efficient regarding the execution of the mediator role if they possess a good command of Feuerstein's (1980) 12 MLE tools which contribute to teachers re-examining their roles as:

- facilitators for learning content knowledge

- facilitators for learning the process, heuristics, and strategies of learning a particular knowledge field
- mediators of knowledge sources (helping learners to learn to access information sources)
- mediators of lifelong learning (helping learners develop dispositions and mindsets for learning to learn)
- mediators of life-wide learning (helping learners transfer learning across contexts and disciplines)
- designers of the learning environment (p. 16)

Namely, teachers would become more reflective practitioners as mediators if they are prepared to be efficient learners of the MLE model. At this point, the challenge for teachers is to use good mediation to design new learning environments to qualify students for learning strategies, thinking skills, and problem-solving techniques because “as designers of the learning environment, teachers engage students in learning beyond the boundary of the classroom and the immediate human interactions, thus fostering in them independence and a higher level of interdependence” (Seng et al. 2003, pp. 16-17).

In the current study, moreover, Huang’s case indicates that there are other approaches to teacher development besides attending teacher-training courses. For example, she could acquire the knowledge of mediation by reading relevant books, engaging in related research, and conducting the hands-on implementation of mediation under theoretical guidance. As Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995, cited in Liao, 2003) argue,

Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see. This kind of learning enables teachers to make the leap from theory to accomplished practice. (p. 191)

X. CONCLUSIONS

Hopefully, the study is among the initial attempts to explore EFL teachers’ knowledge and implementation of the mediator role. Based on the findings, a conclusion is drawn that most EFL teachers fail to mediate their students’ learning. In China’s present educational setting, however, implementing mediation is theoretically acceptable and practically feasible as illustrated by the case of Huang in this study. It is toughly challenging for EFL teachers to administer it smoothly due to the lack of the knowledge of mediation as well as the situational constraints associated with the education system, students, and teachers themselves. It is thus proposed that EFL teachers re-orient their roles from traditional instructor to mediator to adapt to the progress of the society at present.

APPENDIX A MEDIATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher ID: _____

Dear participants,

I am conducting research on “Knowledge of mediation and its implementation among secondary school EFL teachers in China” and would appreciate a few minutes of your time in accomplishing this questionnaire to help with my ongoing research. Your responses will be used for research purposes and kept absolutely confidential. Be kindly informed that safe measures must be taken to ensure that your answered questionnaire sheet will not fall into any wrong hands. No participants will be named in the research. The validity of this survey depends on the extent to which your responses are open and frank. So you are warmly required to answer honestly.

Yours sincerely,

Xxx

Question 1: Do you have any idea of the term “mediator” in EFL teaching? Yes _____ No _____. Please tick one choice between “YES” and “NO” at first. And then define or explain it if you answered “YES”.

Question 2: Please read the following accounts on four EFL teachers’ roles in their classrooms. Answer the questions that follow each account.

Teacher A thinks the teacher should make learners realize the significance of a learning task so that they can see the value of the task to their own. Learners should know how to conduct a learning activity will help them beyond the immediate time and place. In presenting a task, he makes instructions clear and ensures the intention is understood by the learners.

2.1. Is this teacher playing the role of mediator in his class?

Yes _____ No _____ Not sure _____

Please make comments on your answer here.

2.2. Is the role that you play in your own class like this?

Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

Please make comments on your answer here:

Teacher B argues that she fosters the learners' feelings of competence by encouraging them to control their own learning, thinking, and actions. She teaches the learners how to set realistic goals and to locate approaches of achieving them. Helping the learners to develop an internal need to confront challenges and then seek for new ones, she makes them monitor the changes in themselves, and understand human beings are constantly changing. During the activity, the learners' optimistic awareness is developed so that they realize the task is not as difficult as it seems to be.

2.3. Is this teacher playing the role of mediator in her class?

Yes _____ No _____ Not sure _____

Please make comments on your answer here.

2.4. Is the role that you play in your own class like this?

Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

Please make comments on your answer here:

Teacher C believes it important to make his students recognize that some problems are better solved by inviting them to share behaviors and co-operation among themselves on the basis of their own personality and the awareness of their own individuality and uniqueness. He also helps them to establish a sense of belonging to the whole class during the completion of the task.

2.5. Is this teacher playing the role of mediator in his class?

Yes _____ No _____ Not sure _____

Please make comments on your answer here.

2.6. Is the role that you play in your own class like this?

Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

Please make comments on your answer here:

Teacher D regards language as a system of grammatical structures. She teaches EFL basically to ensure that the students can use EFL correctly. The materials that she uses rely on teaching a list of grammatical structures. In her class, she follows the PPP procedure (i.e. presentation, practice, and production) for drilling new grammatical structures. Namely, she first presents a new grammatical structure, then directs her students to practice the structure in a controlled way, and finally asks them to use the structure in a free production activity.

2.7. Is this teacher playing the role of mediator in her class?

Yes _____ No _____ Not sure _____

Please make comments on your answer here.

2.8. Is the role that you play in your own class like this?

Yes _____ No _____ To some extent _____

Please make comments on your answer here:

Question 3: For each of the following 12 statements, please circle the figure from 1 for *never* to 5 for *always* that most closely agrees with your routine teaching practices. Consider your answers in the context of your current job or past work experience.

1= Never; 2= Sometimes; 3= Often; 4= Usually; 5= Always

How often do you:

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Usually	Always
1. make your instructions clear when you give a task to your learners?	1	2	3	4	5
2. tell your learners why they are to do a particular activity?	1	2	3	4	5
3. explain to your learners how carrying out a learning activity will help them in the future?	1	2	3	4	5
4. help learners to develop a feeling of confidence in their ability to learn?	1	2	3	4	5

5. teach learners the strategies they need to learn effectively?	1	2	3	4	5
6. teach learners how to set their own goals in learning?	1	2	3	4	5
7. help your learners to set challenges for themselves and to meet those challenges?	1	2	3	4	5
8. help your learners to monitor changes in themselves?	1	2	3	4	5
9. help your learners to see that if they keep on trying to solve a problem, they will find a solution?	1	2	3	4	5
10. teach your learners to work co-operatively?	1	2	3	4	5
11. help your learners to develop as individuals?	1	2	3	4	5
12. foster in your learners a sense of belonging to a classroom community?	1	2	3	4	5

Question 4: Please complete the following demographic information as appropriate.

Name: _____ Gender: _____

Age: _____ Year(s) of teaching EFL: _____

Educational qualifications attained:

-----Bachelor's Degree

-----Two-Year Certificate

-----Secondary School Certificate

-----Others

The grade you are teaching in:

-----Junior Grade One

-----Junior Grade Two

-----Junior Grade Three

-----Senior Grade One

-----Senior Grade Two

-----Senior Grade Three

The average number of the students in your class: _____

Your contact address and phone number (if applicable):

APPENDIX B CLASSROOM OBSERVATION WORKSHEET

Key: A = Not at all B = Little C = Partly D = Much E = Very much					
Category	Tick & Comment				
1. Significance	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
2. Purpose beyond the here and now	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
3. Shared intention	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
4. A sense of competence	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
5. Control of own behavior	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
6. Goal-setting	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
7. Challenge	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
8. Awareness of change	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
9. A belief in positive outcomes	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
10. Sharing	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
11. Individuality	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				
12. A sense of belonging	A	B	C	D	E
	Comment:				

APPENDIX C TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This interview is to help me better understand what happened and why that happened in your class that I observed. I am keen on why you taught in the way that you did and what obstacles you encountered in implementing the mediator role. You are welcome to make suggestions regarding the currently existing gap between theory and practice in mediation. The interview will take about 30 minutes. Your consent and co-operation will be greatly appreciated.

Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me of the observed lesson from the perspective of your own teaching role.
2. Have you received any particular training that supports you to plan in this way? Could you describe it more accurately?
3. Describe, if applicable, your teacher education program from the perspectives as follows:
 - a. Any central learning that you brought with you from the program into your classroom related to teaching roles.
 - b. How much of what you know, if any, concerning the mediation role that you learnt as a result of your teacher training, either pre-service or in-service.
4. If, beginning tomorrow, students in China were no longer expected to be confronted with the rigorous entrance exam competition, would you still mediate your EFL classroom, if any, or begin to do it? If so, why and how? If not, why?
5. Could you tell me any difficulties which you think prevent you from playing the mediation role in the classroom if you are not playing the mediator at present?
6. In what environment do you think EFL learners learn best? Could you offer me some suggestions on how to most effectively implement the role of mediation in China's settings?

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