

## **An Investigation of College English Teachers Mediation in Classroom: From Perspective of Teachers and Students**

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**Abstract.** Based on Feuerstein's Theory of Mediation, this paper, by means of questionnaire and interview, investigates the Chinese English teachers' views of the importance of each aspect of mediation and their assessment of how often they think they carry out each of these functions in their actual classroom teaching, and students expectation of teachers mediation in classroom. According to the problems reflected from the data, the authors provide some suggestions, hoping to improve the English teaching and teacher education in China.

### **Introduction**

Over the last few decades, many famous theorists conducted the study on foreign language learning motivation. [1] The real increase of students' higher English proficiency, not only need to stimulate their motivation to learn, but also require implementing English pedagogical reform by Graded Education. According to the Vygotsky (1962), the psychologists of social interactionism, the secret of students' effective learning lies in the nature of the social interaction between teacher and student. [2] So for a teacher, an awareness of the degree of match and mismatch between his/her 'espoused' theories and their 'theories-in-action', and the degree of match and mismatch between his/her beliefs and their students understanding about learning as well as the many different ways in which their words and actions can influence the learning that occurs in their classroom, are needed to be understood. [3] As mentors of students, teachers should adjust themselves to be effective mediators.

Based on Feuerstein's Mediation theory, through questionnaire and interview, this paper investigates 45 teachers' perception and practice of mediation in EFL classroom, and 131 students perception of teachers' mediation in class. [4] Implications for EFL teaching and learning are given at the end of the paper.

### **Research Design**

#### *Research questions*

The current study tries to deal with the following research questions:

(1) What are teachers' perceptions on teacher mediation and how do they perform in actual EFL teaching? Is there any gap between their perceptions and practices?

(2) What are students' perceptions on their teachers' mediation? Is there any difference between teachers' perceptions and students'?

#### *Subjects*

Seventy teachers and two hundred and sixty students from the foreign languages school of two universities of Hubei provinces are involved in the questionnaires. Among the 70 teachers, 18(25.7%) of them are males and 52(74.3%) of them are females. Among the 260 students, 64(24.6%) of them are males and 196(75.4) of them are females. They are from three grades, grade 1 (27.7%), grade 2(45.5%) and grade 3(26.9%), all of them major in either English education or

Business English.

*Data collection and analysis*

The questionnaires for both teachers and students are adopted from William and Burden (2000). Teachers' questionnaires consist of two sections. In section one, teachers are asked to give their viewpoint on mediation with a scale of 'not at all', 'not very', 'somewhat', 'quite important' to 'very important'. In section two, teachers were required to evaluate their actual performance of teacher mediation in their teaching with a five-point scale ranging from 'very often' to 'never'. The questionnaires administered to 76 teachers were all conducted in earnest attempt and retrieved well, 70 (about 92.1%) of the questionnaires are effective. The scale showed adequate internal consistency, the Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was .793 in the current study.

After the accomplishment of the questionnaires, 5 teachers and 20 students were randomly chosen and were interviewed for a further understanding of teacher mediation in EFL classroom. The interviews were carried out in a comfortable and relaxing manner in Chinese.

All the quantitative data were put into the SPSS 18.0; descriptive statistics of teachers' perception and practice of teacher mediation were analyzed. Paired Sample T-test was carried out to exam the difference between teachers' perception and practice of teacher mediation in the two perspectives, and an Independent sample T-test for the difference between teachers and students' perception of teacher mediation. The data from interview were recorded and then transcribed.

**Results and discussions**

*Teachers' perceptions and practices on teacher mediation*

The results of the paired-sample T-test of teachers' perceptions and actions based on the 12 variables were showed in table 1.

TABLE 1 PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS

mediation		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
shared intention	perception	4.4000	.90730	.435	.665
	practice	4.3571	.79920		
significance	perception	3.3143	1.09733	-2.954	.004
	practice	3.6857	.98603		
transcendence	perception	3.2571	1.16328	-.575	.567
	practice	3.3286	1.03169		
sense of competence	perception	4.5000	.71728	4.121	.000
	practice	3.9714	.88418		
control of own behavior	perception	4.0714	.68781	4.664	.000
	practice	3.5714	.94134		
goal-setting	perception	3.8857	.84344	5.228	.000
	practice	3.2000	.98687		
challenge	perception	3.4000	1.22060	4.323	.000
	practice	2.9286	.92190		
awareness of change	perception	2.8143	1.01143	2.165	.034
	practice	2.5143	.84687		
believe in positive outcome	perception	3.7429	.81090	5.516	.000
	practice	3.1857	.83913		
sharing	perception	3.9000	.93483	4.920	.000
	practice	3.3286	.92817		
individuality	perception	3.5286	1.17611	1.686	.096
	practice	3.2000	1.13699		
sense of belonging	perception	3.0571	1.19037	4.270	.000
	practice	2.6000	1.13444		

N=70

As can be seen from table 1, among the 12 perspectives of teacher mediation, teachers take *shared intention*, *sense of competence*, *control of own behavior* as the most important, the mean of

the three aspects are higher than 4.0. *Awareness of change* was considered the least important (M=2.8143, S.D. =1.01143). Lai (2004) and Yang (2006) also found their subjects take *shared intention* as the most important perspective, and *awareness of change* as the least. This is possibly because of the traditional way of evaluation; the school usually employs the final and mid-term exam to measure students' achievement in a term. Most of the teachers failed to realize the importance of cultivating students' *awareness of change*.

From the descriptive statistics of the practices of teachers' mediation in classroom, we can see that the best performed is *shared intention*, and it is the only one perspective scored above 4.0, while *challenge*, *awareness of change* and *sense of belonging* scored below 3.0 which means those teachers rarely performed those meditational functions in class. The general level of practices on teacher mediation is lower the teachers' perception of teacher mediation.

As for the differences between teachers' perceptions and practices, the significance exists on all the variables except *shared intention*, *transcendence* and *individuality*. The p-values of *significance*, *sense of competence*, *control of behavior*, *goal-setting*, *challenge*, *believe in positive outcome* and *sharing* show that teachers perception and practice upon these perspectives are significantly different, the P-value are less than .005. The P-value for *awareness of change* is .034, which indicates a relevantly smaller difference but still a significant one. [5] Here we can add some analysis of the three perspectives in which teachers perform as well as they perceive them.

#### *Teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher mediation*

The results of the Independent Sample T-test of teachers' and students' perceptions on the 12 variables were showed in table 2.

TABLE 2 INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

	subject	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means		
				Mean difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	t
Shared intention	student	4.3714	.93517	.31374	.016	2.426
	teacher	4.0577	.96689			
Significance	student	3.3143	1.12344	-.16264	.236	-1.186
	teacher	3.4769	.98808			
Transcendence	student	3.2000	1.12417	-.08077	.577	-.559
	teacher	3.2808	1.05907			
Sense of competence	student	4.5143	.73707	.23352	.030	2.188
	teacher	4.2808	.97161			
Control of own behavior	student	4.0571	.72002	-.08901	.401	-.842
	teacher	4.1462	.99117			
Goal-setting	student	3.8857	.82608	.31648	.010	2.610
	teacher	3.5692	1.13518			
Challenge	student	3.4571	1.05893	-.07747	.606	-.516
	teacher	3.5346	1.12995			
Awareness of change	student	2.8571	.83901	.04560	.708	.376
	teacher	2.8115	1.10416			
Belief in positive outcome	student	3.7429	.84589	.32747	.009	2.633
	teacher	3.4154	1.16768			
Sharing	student	3.8286	.91638	.35165	.007	2.733
	teacher	3.4769	1.08848			
Individuality	student	3.6571	1.01989	.33407	.021	2.346
	teacher	3.3231	1.18690			
Sense of belonging	student	3.1714	1.08976	.09451	.522	.642
	teacher	3.0769	1.09485			

From table 2, we can see that teachers and students agree upon the three most important teacher mediation functions, which are *shared intention*, *sense of competence* and *control of behavior*. The average mean for both teachers and students are above 4.0. *Awareness of change* (Mteacher=2.8115, Mstudent=2.8571) and *sense of belonging* (Mteacher=3.0769, Mstudent=3.1714) were perceived as the least important mediation function by teachers and students as well.

The significant difference of perception on teacher mediation between teachers and students shows on *shared intention* ( $p=.016$ ,  $t=2.426$ ), *sense of competence* ( $p=.30$ ,  $t=2.188$ ), *goal-setting* ( $p=.010$ ,  $t=2.610$ ), *belief in positive outcome* ( $p=.009$ ,  $t=2.633$ ), *sharing* ( $p=.007$ ,  $t=2.733$ ), *individuality* ( $p=.021$ ,  $t=2.346$ ), students' expectations of teachers' mediation function are significantly higher than teachers own perception of their mediation functions in classroom, which means students expect their teachers to do more about shared intention, cultivating sense of competence, goal-setting, belief in positive outcome, sharing and individuality. In a certain sense, this might not be a good phenomenon, since it is the final goal of education in college English class to cultivate autonomous learners. [6] It might not be appropriate for them to expect too much on teachers, although as teachers, they should try their best to fulfill their function of mediation in classroom

## Conclusion

Though the sample in this study is limited, but the results of the investigation do bring us to think about problems on teacher mediation in ESL classroom in China. First, Generally speaking teachers are aware of the importance of teacher mediation in EFL classroom except helping students raising the awareness of change. However there are big discrepancies between what teachers believe and how they behave about their mediate function in class except *shared intention, transcendence and individuality*. [7] Second, Students expect more from their teachers about teacher mediation esp. in perspective of *shared intention, sense of competence, goal-setting, belief in positive outcome, sharing, and individuality*. Third, teachers and students are similar upon the ranking of teacher mediation. Awareness of change and sense of belonging have been labeled as least important teacher mediation by students and teachers. Shared intention, sense of competence and control of behavior were perceived as the three most important teacher mediations by teachers and students.

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