

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

English Teachers' Perception of Mediation in Language Classrooms and Their Teaching Practices as Mediators

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Ethical Statement

Consent forms were distributed, ethical board approval was granted (Kütahya Dumlupınar University)

Funding Information

No funding was received for the study.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

ABSTRACT

There is a growing emphasis on acknowledging the significance of mediation within English language classrooms, reflecting an increased interest in recognizing its importance as one of the teachers' new roles (Rezaeian, 2022). According to mediation theory, "helping learners to find ways of moving into their next level of understanding of the language" is the teachers' role (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 66). This paper aims to investigate English teachers' perception of mediation and their teaching practices as mediators and raise an awareness about mediated learning among English teachers. Data for this study was collected from Mediation Questionnaire for Language Teachers designed by Williams and Burden (1997). The questionnaire includes two sections each containing 12 individual questions. First section focuses on teachers' perspectives on the significance of mediation. In the second section, teachers are asked to evaluate the frequency with which they believe they perform practices of mediation. The questionnaire was applied to 45 Turkish EFL teachers working at Ministry of National Education in Kütahya province. Results of the questionnaire survey suggest that to some extent, EFL teachers have capability to facilitate students' learning. They believe that mediation is important to some extent in language classrooms. However, their implementation is lower compared to what they think. Although we as English teachers are trying to facilitate our students' learning, we may need to have a deeper understanding of mediation theory to improve ourselves as mediators. Findings of this study are expected to contribute to field of Foreign Language Education.

Key Words: mediation, English teaching, mediator, EFL teacher

Received: 16/09/2024

Accepted: 16/09/2024

INTRODUCTION

According to the approaches in EFL settings, there are different teacher roles. As these roles have changed in time, teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge anymore. Williams and Burden (1997) state teachers' roles include facilitating learning by teaching effective learning strategies, building confidence, inspiring motivation, demonstrating personal engagement, fostering self-esteem, and creating a good learning atmosphere. One of the important roles of the teachers is mediation. There is a growing emphasis on acknowledging the significance of mediation within English language classrooms, reflecting an increased interest in recognizing its importance as one of the teachers' new roles (Rezaeian, 2022). According to social constructivists like Vygotsky, teachers are encouraged to have the role of mediators instead of traditional roles such as being the source of knowledge (Williams & Burden, 1997). It is widely recognized that the concept of mediation has a central position in the psychology of both Vygotsky and Feuerstein (Asmalı, 2016). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines zone of proximal development (ZPD) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". When teachers use the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a diagnostic tool, they can provide learning conditions that facilitate the emergence of specific developments in the future (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Theory of Vygotsky is very much aligned with Feuerstein's theory of mediation.

Mediation describes the supportive role that effective teachers and parents play in enhancing their children's cognitive abilities (Haywood & Lidz, 2007). According to mediation theory, "helping learners to find ways of moving into their next level of understanding of the language" is the teachers' role (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 66). Presseisen and Kozulin (1992) describe mediated learning as enhancing students' learning experiences through meaningful social interactions between teachers and learners.

While it is crucial for educators to understand the significance of mediation and integrate its principles into language classrooms, practices proposed by mediation theory "have not yet been tapped by language teachers" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 39). Motivation to know if the knowledge about mediation and its applications as a mediator in language classrooms is really enough to increase the quality of language education arouses the need for conducting studies on mediation among language teachers. There is limited number of studies in Türkiye that comprehensively examine the knowledge and application of mediation by Turkish EFL teachers. For example, Sivacı (2017) investigated the knowledge of Turkish EFL teachers in terms of mediation. The participants were only 17 English instructors working at a foundation university. The study has suffered from an inadequate sample size. That encourages researchers to study the perceptions of mediation among Turkish EFL teachers working at Ministry of National Education in state schools. This paper aims to investigate English teachers' perception of mediation and their teaching practices as mediators and raise an awareness about mediated learning among English teachers. The reason is that we, as English teachers, may not be well equipped with mediation theory and the findings are expected to contribute to the field of Foreign Language Education.

This study includes following questions:

1. What is the perception of language teachers about Feuerstein's theory of mediated learning experience?
2. To what extent mediation theory is applied in language classrooms by English teachers?



Literature Review

Feuerstein suggested a model for the Mediated Learning Experience criteria in which teachers can facilitate mediation through twelve different ways (Williams & Burden, 1997). These are:

1. Significance: The teacher ought to foster students' awareness of the significance of a learning task, enabling them to comprehend its value on a personal level and within a broader cultural context.
2. Purpose beyond the here and now: The teacher should make students aware of how the learning activity will also contribute to their future development.
3. Shared intention: The teacher should give the instructions clearly and comprehensibly to students.
4. A sense of competence: The teacher should foster a sense of competence and capability among learners in mastering various specific tasks.
5. Control of own behavior: The teacher should empower students to develop autonomy, enabling them to independently control and regulate their actions, learning processes, and cognitive functions.
6. Goal setting: The teacher should guide students in establishing realistic goals, as well as assist them in identifying strategies to accomplish those objectives.
7. Challenge: The teacher should motivate students to respond challenges and seek new ones in their lives.
8. Awareness of change: The teacher should support students to raise an awareness that human beings undergo constant change and aid them in recognizing these changes.
9. A belief in positive outcomes: The teacher should empower students to maintain the belief that there are always solutions, even when faced with challenging problems.
10. Sharing: The teacher should help students understand that certain issues can be resolved through collaborative efforts.
11. Individuality: The teacher should assist learners in acknowledging and appreciating their own distinctive characteristics and uniqueness.
12. A sense of belonging: The educator should support students in fostering a sense of belonging to a community and culture.

There has been restricted study on this area. In one of the studies, Xiongyong (2011) examined the understanding of mediation and the roles of mediators among Chinese teachers. The research findings indicated that teachers had reported having limited understanding of mediation and the associated roles of a mediator.

also carried out a mixed-methods study regarding Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of different features of mediation. Study findings revealed a correlation between instructors' understanding of mediation and their implementations in their classes. However, it was observed that application of mediation by instructors does not entirely align with their theoretical knowledge of the subject.

Another study by Samuel (2012) suggested that language teachers in China face challenges in effectively



mediating students' learning due to misconceptions about mediation process. Consequently, it was noted that a significant number of students were passively receiving knowledge from the teacher.

In Türkiye, Sivacı (2017) investigated the knowledge of Turkish EFL teachers in terms of mediation. The participants were only 17 English instructors working at a foundation university. Findings revealed that the teachers lacked a clear understanding of the concept of mediation. However, their responses to questions regarding their practices suggested that they applied general features rather than context-specific features of 12 Mediated Learning Experience.

METHOD

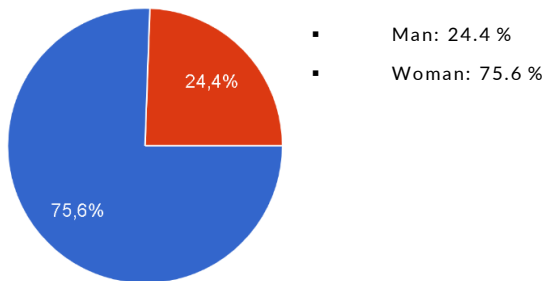
Research Design

Quantitative method was used in this investigation. The study was conducted using questionnaires administered to English teachers.

Setting and Participants

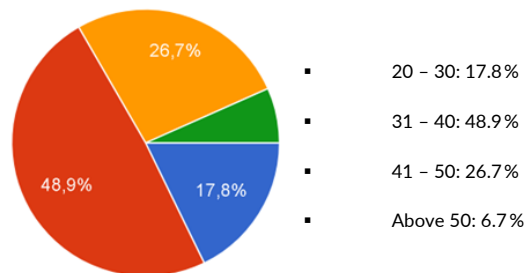
The participants in this study were 45 Turkish EFL school teachers working at Ministry of National Education in Kütahya province. The study used convenience sampling method.

Figure 1. Percentage of Gender

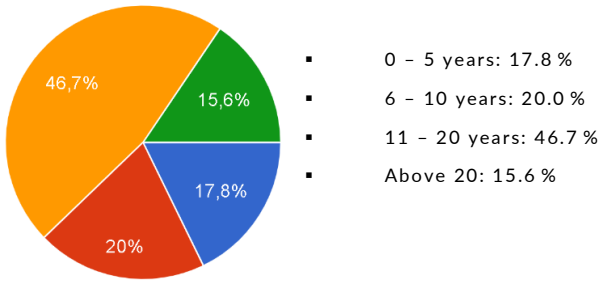


According to Figure 1, most participants are female, comprising 75.6% of the total. Male participants make up only 24.4% of the total.

Figure 2. Percentage of Age



Many of the participants are between 31 - 40.

Figure 3. Percentage of Experience

Many of the participants have 11 - 20 years of teaching experience.

Instruments

Data for this study was collected from Mediation Questionnaire for Language Teachers designed by Williams and Burden (1997).

The questionnaire includes two sections each containing 12 individual questions. First section focuses on teachers' perspectives on the significance of mediation. In the second section, teachers are asked to evaluate the frequency with which they believe they perform practices of mediation. The questionnaire is structured on a five-point scale, encompassing responses from 'very important' to 'not at all' in the first section, and from 'always' to 'rarely' in the second section.

Procedure

Mediation Questionnaire for Language Teachers designed by Williams and Burden (1997) was applied to Turkish EFL teachers working at Ministry of National Education in Kütahya province. The questionnaire was applied online using Google forms.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the questionnaire was conducted by using Jamovi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. Teachers' Perception on Mediation

Questions	N	Mean	SD
Q1_1 Significance	45	4.71	0.695
Q1_2 Purpose beyond the here and now	45	4.49	0.727

Questions	N	Mean	SD
Q1_3 Shared intention	45	4.29	0.815
Q1_4 A sense of competence	45	4.44	0.659
Q1_5 Control of own behavior	45	4.29	0.920
Q1_6 Goal setting	45	4.33	0.798
Q1_7 Challenge	45	4.07	0.915
Q1_8 Awareness of change	45	4.02	0.892
Q1_9 A belief in positive outcomes	45	4.29	0.869
Q1_10 Sharing	45	4.24	0.908
Q1_11 Individuality	45	4.29	0.944
Q1_12 Sense of belonging	45	4.27	0.889

Teachers were asked to rate the importance they give each of the 12 MLE features using a 5-point Likert scale in first part of the questionnaire. The 12 statements were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "not important at all", 2 indicated "little", 3 indicated "some", 4 indicated "very" and 5 indicated "essential".

Table 1 displays mean scores and standard deviations for 12 mediation features concerning perceptions of the teacher participants. 8th question related to "awareness of change" was rated lowest. The question was "How important do you think it is to help your learners to monitor changes in themselves?" 1st question related to "shared intention" was rated highest. The question was "How important do you think it is to make your instructions clear when you give a task to your learners?"

Table 2: Teachers' Perception on the usage Frequency on Mediation

Questions	N	Mean	SD
Q2_1 Significance	45	4.36	0.883
Q2_2 Purpose beyond the here and now	45	4.13	0.815
Q2_3 Shared intention	45	3.98	0.965
Q2_4 A sense of competence	45	4.09	0.973
Q2_5 Control of own behavior	45	3.98	1.097
Q2_6 Goal setting	45	3.84	0.999
Q2_7 Challenge	45	3.69	1.041
Q2_8 Awareness of change	45	3.84	0.928
Q2_9 A belief in positive outcomes	45	4.09	0.973
Q2_10 Sharing	45	3.98	1.011
Q2_11 Individuality	45	4.16	0.903
Q2_12 Sense of belonging	45	3.93	0.963

Teachers were asked to rate frequency of their implementation of each of 12 MLE features using a 5-point Likert scale in the second part of the questionnaire. The 12 statements regarding respondents' mediative behaviors were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "never", 2 indicated "sometimes", 3 indicated "often", 4 indicated "usually" and 5 indicated "always".

Table 2 displays mean scores and standard deviations for 12 mediation features concerning behaviors of the

teacher participants. 7th question related to "Challenge" was rated lowest. The question was "How often do you help your learners to set challenges for themselves and to meet those challenges?" 1st question related to "shared intention" was rated highest. The question was "How often do you make your instructions clear when you give a task to your learners?"

Table 3: Teachers' Perception of Mediation and Their Perception on the usage Frequency of Mediation

Averages	N	Mean	SD
Part 1	45	4.31	0.656
Part 2	45	4.01	0.799

Teachers were asked to rate the importance they give each of 12 MLE features using a 5-point Likert scale in first part of the questionnaire. According to Table 3 mean value of Part 1 is higher than the mean value of Part 2. Teachers were asked to rate the frequency of their implementation of each of 12 MLE features in second part of the questionnaire.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that teachers' perceptions of mediation and their perceptions of usage frequency of mediation are not enough.

According to results, it can be said that teachers' perspectives on the significance of mediation is higher than the frequency with which they believe they perform practices of mediation. They believe that mediation is important to some extent in language classroom. However, their implementation is lower compared to what they think.

An independent-samples t-test was performed to compare questionnaire results between male and female participants and there is no significant difference.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study examined the importance of mediation theory and teachers' perception on the usage frequency of mediation within Turkish EFL setting. Results indicate that teachers' perception of mediation and their perception on the usage frequency of mediation are not enough. This displays that their implementation is not enough and lower when compared to what they think. This study's results align with prior research, including studies such as Xiongyong (2011). The research examined understanding of Chinese teachers regarding mediation and their roles as mediators. Findings indicated that teachers expressed having restricted knowledge concerning mediation and the responsibilities associated with being a mediator.

Turkish teachers ought to integrate these findings into their teaching methodologies to enhance effectiveness in their classrooms.

As this study was applied to 45 Turkish EFL teachers working at Ministry of National Education in Kütahya province, it is important to note that its conclusions may not be applicable or generalizable to other educational contexts.

Observation of language classrooms was not considered in the present study. Further research studies can focus on making observations and also conducting a qualitative research about the usage frequency of mediation within Turkish EFL setting.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our participant teachers for providing data for the questionnaire, also the issue editors and the reviewers.

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