A Survey of EFL Instructors' Mediative Knowledge across Contexts of Teaching

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The current mixed-method study probed EFL instructors' mediative knowledge across four different contexts of teaching including language institutes, universities, and senior and junior high schools in Iran. To this end, 181 EFL instructors, 80 males and 101 females, completed mediative closed-questionnaire which composed of twelve items to measure EFL instructors' knowledge of mediation across context. Out of 181, 72 participants, 16 (22%) institute instructors, 20 (28%) university instructors, 19 (26.38%) senior instructors, and 17 (23.61%) junior instructors participated in oral interview. Results of descriptive statistics and Chi-square showed that there exist significant differences among EFL instructors in seven mediative items; furthermore, the difference shows that there exists relationship between EFL instructors' mediative knowledge across the contexts; however, in five mediative items, no differences were found across contexts. Results of oral interview of EFL instructors in terms of assessment revealed that they mostly believed that learners through instructors' guidance should self-assess their learning and behavior. To achieve such an end, they suggested instructors' step by step scaffolding and strategic deliverance of assessment to the learners. In terms of cooperation and individualization, the results of oral interview revealed that instructors believed in unified improvement of both of them. To improve both, pair and group works were suggested to boost cooperation whereas competition and individual activities were suggested to foster individualization. Context variation due to its own community and unique characteristics, learners' potential to self-assess their learning, and development of whole learner were suggested to be taken into consideration by instructors, educationalists, parents, and curriculum, and course designers.

Key Words: instructors; mediation; knowledge; contexts, EFL

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1 Introduction

To develop a fully functional learner, teachers should create a setting in which learners actively and willingly engage in the process of learning. By active involvement in the process of learning tasks, we mean that they are enabled to notice their own needs and objectives, and choose the way that they think is the best preferred method of learning. It is necessary to mention that this is not sufficient in itself because learners should reflect and finally act on the outcomes. Having learned in such a way, learners would become more motivated and committed to the task of learning since they see relevance between what they are learning and their actual lives. Hence, they would have a positive and committed feeling to the process of learning. Learners with a capacity to engage in the process of learning are assumed to be autonomous learners. To be an autonomous learner, we do not mean that teachers should not intervene in the process of their learning. Instead, they should assist the learners while they are tackling with the problems in order to activate their potentials (Karlesson, Kjisik, & Nordlund, 2006). To be able to support learners, teachers should know the rules of scaffolding and mediation because lack of sufficient and relevant information in terms of scaffolding, mediation theory (MT), and mediator's role would eventuate to misconception regarding teaching, learning, and intervention (Cheng, 2011, 2012).

Based on MT, teachers and instructors should have knowledge of when, where, and how to intervene in the process of learning in order to direct their learners toward the path of how to become independent and learn how to learn (Williams & Burden, 1997). Feuerstein (1980, pp. 15-16) indicated that MT is "the way in which stimuli emitted by the environment are transferred by a 'mediating' agent, usually a parent, sibling or other caregiver. This mediating agent, guided by his intentions, culture, and emotional investment, selects and organizes the world of stimuli for the child through the process of mediation; the cognitive structure of the child is affected". According to Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) (2001, pp. 87-88, as cited in Dendrinos, 2006), the mediator is "the language user not concerned to express his/her own meanings, but simply to act as an intermediary between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly –normally (but not exclusively) speakers of different languages".

By considering the significance of teachers' awareness of mediative features in the teachers' successful teaching and learners' achievement and cross-cultural differences between Iranian educational context and other contexts such as that of Cheng (2011, 2012) in China, it seems that lack of research in the domains of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) and MT in an EFL context such as Iran calls for a thorough investigation. Accordingly, Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) noted that lack of MLE is responsible for learners' deficiencies in learning tools, positive disposition, and propensity to

learn. Being aware of the results of this study, teachers in different settings might attempt to apply mediative features more in their settings. Considering the fact that range, rate, phase, and duration of intervention is very important both in learners' learning and teachers' time allocation, teachers' knowledge in terms of mediative features would concentrate on those tasks in which learners need more support. Because of due investment and consideration, what is required for effective teaching and learning would be affected and thus, it might lead to a prosperous condition for ideal education. To obviate lack of mediative research in EFL context such as Iran, the present study aims to apply triangulation to investigate if EFL instructors' mediative knowledge differs across contexts.

As such, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1. Is there any difference among EFL instructors in terms of their mediative knowledge across four different contexts?

RQ2. In the perspectives of EFL instructors in Iran, who should assess the learners and what strategies do EFL instructors think are conductive in actualization of such beliefs?

RQ3. What perspectives do EFL instructors in Iran have in terms of cooperation and individualization?

2 Literature Review

Trends of teaching and learning have shifted from behavioristic perspectives to cognitivists' ideas in the previous decades. Behavioristic views believed in the passivity of learners and centrality of teachers as the sole modeler and shaper of learners' knowledge and information based on which good habits must be developed and errors should be prevented in any cost and structured input should be presented in order to elicit controlled output and finally, teaching and learning must be designed on the basis of S-R and subsequent reinforcement (Skinner, 1957). Cognitivists such as Ausubel (1967) and McLaughlin (1987) believed that learners are not inactive imitators of their teachers' stimulus; instead they have cognition which helps them take responsibility of their learning and they can build their new knowledge on the basis of their previous knowledge; what is very important is that the learning should be meaningful and teachers should let learners learn form their own internal hypotheses in order to test and in these processes errors should be counted inevitable; in the final run, learners' autonomy should be established. In comparison to cognitivists, constructivists such as Piaget (1974) believed that learners through interaction with environment and in accordance with their growth of biological endowment without any human intervention are able to develop their learning.

Brunner (1966) believed in goal-oriented education in which the process and product of learning must be considered and through creating challenge; learners should be stimulated to try for excellence, and they should

also be helped to reach the state of learning how to learn. Kelly (1955) noted that teachers should help their learners to construct their own hypothesis to confirm and disconfirm, and the learners should be suggested that they never come to a final answer because any answer will be a start for another new question.

Based on social interactionism, as Vygotsky (1978) and Feuerstein (1980, 1991) stated, human beings are born in social world among other community members. Based on their perspectives, their learning experiences shape according to the interaction that they have with other significant people around them and in this respect, their ideas are in contrast with Piaget's perspectives. According to Ellis (2008), sociocultural theory assumes that learning arises not through interaction but in interaction. Ellis stresses that learners first succeed in performing a new task with the help of another person, and then, they internalize the task so that they can perform it on their own. One of the most important contributions of SCT is the distinction Vygotsky made between the child's actual and potential levels of development or what he called (ZPD). Concept of ZPD is one of the most important construct of sociocultural theory which is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as is 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" (Vygotsky, 1978, p . 86).

Pratt (1992) interviewed teachers and scholars in terms of teaching. The results revealed that they see teaching as transferring content, flourishing of characters, and development of relationship. Based on the findings, the first two indicates that teachers provide ready-made knowledge and the third one showed that learners are capable of taking responsibility of learning. Chang (1993) triangulated his study by using interview and mediative questionnaire in order to collect data from both teachers and learners. After collecting and analyzing data, the results illuminated that there exists discrepancy between EFL instructors 'ideal' knowledge of mediation and their practice inside the classroom. Pratt, Kelly, and Wong (1998) utilized focus group interview, survey, observation, and interviews among Chinese teachers. The results showed that teachers might play the role of master, skillful performer, or coach. Gao and Watkins (2002) conducted a mixed method study which was triangulated using interview and survey. The results indicated that Chinese teachers' conception is different from their counterparts in other societies in that Chinese teachers believed that learners' performance in exams is more helpful while in other institution standard is more paramount. Another important difference between these two cultures is related to the fact that Chinese teachers combine teaching with good conducts and social behaviors while on the other side the western counterparts focus mostly on what facilitates learning interest in the learners.

Seng (2003) conducted a five stage scenarios in order to figure out if teachers' intervention and mediative role in the process of teaching culminate in cognitive achievement of not. The results proved that Feuerstein's mediation theory would lead to learners' cognitive development. Seabi (2012) too, investigated children who suffered disability in learning. The results of the study showed that group of learners who received mediation and intervention, gained more development in comparison to another group.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

One-hundred and eighty-one English as a Foreign Language teachers (EFLTs) participated in the present study. The total participants composed of 72 (40%) junior teachers, 38 (21%) senior teachers, 48 (26%) institute teachers, and 23 (13%) university teachers. One-hundred and sixty-two (90%) were from different towns of Guilan province, Iran and 19 (10%) of them were from other provinces in Iran including Tehran, Markazi, Ardabil, Mazandaran, and Khorasan provinces. To sample, cluster random sampling were used for participants in Guilan and convenience sampling were used for those participants who were from already-mentioned provinces. Out of 181 participants, 80 (44%) were males and 101 (56%) of them were females. Out of 181 participants, 72 (40%) agreed to answer open-ended questionnaire. Out of 72 interviewees 16 (22%) were institute teachers and 36 (50%) were senior and junior high school teachers and 20 (28%) were university teachers. EFL instructors' field of study were TEFL (67%), Translation (16%), Linguistics (2%), Literature (15%) and their education degree were AA (1%), BA (64%), MA (34%), and PhD (1%) and their age ranged from 20 to 60.

3.2 Instruments

To triangulate the findings, two instruments were used in data collection.

Mediation questionnaire

The closed-ended questionnaire which was based on Warren's (1995) questionnaire starts with consent part that aims to establish confidentiality in the participants and contact number and email address for those who willingly want to participate in the follow-up phase, and at the end of this part, there exists demographic section. The second part is composed of 12 items each of which investigates participants' knowledge in term of mediative feature. Above these twelve items, there exist numbers from one to five that their values start from *not at all important* to *very important*. Finally, having the same twelve items in terms of wording, the third part aims to

measure the participants' mediative practices in their classes. Having numbers from 1 to 5, with values starting from *never* to *very often* reveal how often EFL instructors apply their knowledge of mediation. Before collecting data from total participants, the data were collected from 51 participants in a pilot study and Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated to be .91%.

Oral interview items

The oral interview items were designed according to existing literature (Cheng, 2011, 2012; Warren, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997). The oral interview items were composed of two questions that aim to explore EFL instructors' views with respect to assessment, cooperation, and individualization. Before distributing the two interview questions among 72 interviewees, the two questions were given to five participants and they were asked to reveal their ideas regarding wordings, content, and any possible problems. Regarding the two questions, no problems were noticed; as a result, the two questions were distributed among other interviewees but the five initial participants' answers to two questions were not included in other data.

3.3 Procedures

The mediation questionnaire was translated into Persian in order to avoid misunderstandings on the part of the participants. The validity of translation was ensured through back translation of the English version of the questionnaire. To this end, three instructors and three EFL teachers were asked to review the accuracy of the translation. After being modified, the questionnaire was piloted in order to ensure its reliability and detect possible problems that could occur. To this end, 5 English teachers were selected out of the whole population and then they were asked to complete the questionnaire with the circumstances similar to the main phase of the survey. As the teachers had some information in terms of the questionnaire, they were excluded from the final sample and no data were collected from them again. After this phase, the questionnaire was given to fifty-one teachers and its high reliability was ensured. Next, the questionnaire was distributed among the target participants of the study.

3.4 Data analysis

To analyze the collected data through oral interview, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were used. The data were codified and all the quantitative data were entered into SPSS package (Version 19). Descriptive statistics including frequencies, mean, standard deviation, and range were reported. In addition, Chi-square was run to compare EFLTs' mediative knowledge across contexts. To analyze the data gathered through oral

interview, qualitative and quantitative analyses were both used. To this end, the factors stated by the participants were marked and finally, all factors were extracted and counted to see what mediative features teachers in different settings applied. After calculating the frequency, the percentage of the factors were calculated and then based on frequency and percentage of the qualitative data, those factors that had the highest percentage and frequency were extracted and then interpreted. In qualitative analysis of the data, description, interpretation, and comparison were utilized to interpret the findings.

4 Results

In this part, results of knowledge questionnaire and oral interviews of EFL instructors regarding cooperation, individualization, and assessment across the context are summarized and represented.

4.1 Results of closed questionnaire

Table 1 encompasses the summary of mediative knowledge items and it renders the descriptive statistics, percentage, and Chi-square of EFLTs knowledge across the context as far the closed questionnaire is concerned.

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistics, Percentage, and Chi-square of EFL Instructors' Knowledge of Mediation across Contexts

	SD	Percentage					Chi	Df	Asymp Sig
		N	H	F	I	VI			
		1	2	3	4	5			
1. Making the instruction clear	J	100	…	75	47	30.4	17.79	9	.038
	.67								
	S	…	…	25	22.7	16.6			
	I	…	…	…	19.7	34.3			
	U	…	…	…	10.6	15.7			
2. Telling the reason of doing an activity	J	0	42.9	30.2	44.7	40	11.02	12	.527
	S	.82	0	14.3	23.3	16.5	28.9		
	I		100	42.9	34.9	24.7	17.8		
	U		0	0	11.5	14.1	13.3		
3. Explain	J	0	33.3	23.1	43.8	46.8			

-ing how to do an activity	S	.78	0	33.3	17.9	18	27.7	22.91	9	.000
	I		0	33.3	48.7	27	6.4			
	U		0	0	4	10	9			
4. Helping develop feeling of confidence	J		0	0	43.8	52.3	31.6	15.30	9	.083
	S	.70	0	100	25	15.4	22.4			
	I		0	0	18.8	21.5	31.6			
	U		0	0	12.5	10.8	14.3			
5. Teaching the strategies they need to do well	J		0	100	52	32.4	41.7	8.40	9	.494
	S	.72	0	0	12	19.7	25			
	I		0	0	28	33.8	20.2			
	U		0	0	8	14.1	13.1			
6. Helping to set their goals	J		0	28.6	41.7	37.8	42.9	12.93	9	.165
	S	.81	0	0	22.2	15.9	30.4			
	I		0	57.1	25	28	21.4			
	U		0	14.3	11.1	18.3	5.4			
7. Helping set challenge for themselves	J		0	36	26.7	48.7	41.3	29.64	12	.003
	S	.89	0	20	17.8	15.4	34.8			
	I		50	20	33.3	32.1	10.9			
	U		50	30	22.2	3.8	13.8			
8. Helping learners monitor changes	J		0	42.9	35.1	40.9	44.9	23.50	12	.024
	S	.90	0	28.6	12.3	18.2	34.7			
	I		50	0	40.4	25.8	14.3			
	U									
9. Persistence help learners find the solution	J		0	40	25	42.5	43.1	19.83	9	.020
	S	.77	0	20	12.9	16.1	32.8			
	I		0	0	41.9	29.9	15.5			
	U		0	2.8	17.1	48.1	32			

			Not	Hard	Imp	V. imp		c^2	df	sig
10. Teach learners to work cooperative-ly	J		0	33.3	33.3	43.3	39.5			
	S	.80	0	66.7	29.2	9	26.7	34.27	12	.001
	I		0	0	29.2	17.9	3.5			
	U		100	0	29.2	17.9	3.5			
11. Help the learners develop as an individual	J		50	44.4	32.5	35.7	52.3			
	S	.91	25	33.3	15	25	15.9	15.35	12	.223
	I		25	11.1	27.5	26.2	29.5			
	U		0	11.1	25	13.1	2.3			
12. Foster a sense of belonging in the learners	J		0	66.7	27.3	28.9	45.8			
	S		0	0	18.2	15.3	29.2	30.44	12	.002
	I		0	0	24.2	34.7	20			
	U	.81	100	33.3	30.3	11.1	4.2			

Note: Not= not at all, Hard= hardly, Imp= important, V. imp= very important/ Juni= junior, Seni= senior, Insti= institute, Uni= university

Regarding making the instruction clear, 9 (75%) junior teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 31 (47%) junior teachers claimed ***important*** and 31 (30.4%) junior teachers believed ***very important***, and 3 (25%) senior teachers thought ***fairly*** important and 15 (22.7%) senior teachers stated ***important*** and 20 (19.6%) senior teachers stated ***very important*** and 13 (19.7%) institute teachers claimed ***important*** and 35 (34%) institute teachers stated ***very important*** and 7 (10.6%) university teachers stated ***important*** and 16 (15.7%) university teachers claimed ***very important*** moreover, the (M= 4.48, SD= .67; R= 4). With this item the c^2 (1, N= 181) = 17.797, p= .038 < .05 reveals that there is a significant difference among teachers of different settings.

With respect to telling the learners why they are to do an activity, 3 (40.3%) junior teachers claimed ***hardly*** important and 13 (30.2%) junior teachers claimed ***fairly*** important and 38 (44.7%) junior teachers believed ***important*** and 18 (40%) junior teachers believed ***very important*** and 1 (14.3%) senior teacher believed ***hardly*** and 10 (23.3%) senior teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 14 (6.5%) senior teachers believed ***important*** and 13 (28.9%) senior teachers believed ***very important,*** and 3 (42.9%) institute teachers claimed ***hardly*** important and 15 (34.9%) institutes teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 21 (24.7%) institute teachers believed ***important*** and 8 (17.8%) institute teachers believed ***very important*** and 5 (11.5%) university teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 12 (14.1%)

university teachers claimed *important* and 6 (13.3%) university teachers believed *very important* and the (M= 3.91, SD= .82; R= 4). With this item the c^2 (2, N= 181) = 11.028, p= .527 < .05 shows that there is no significant difference in this regard.

In terms of explaining to learners how carrying out the learning activity, 2 (33.3%) junior teachers believed *hardly* important and 9 (23.1%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 39 (43.8) junior teachers believed *important* and 22 (46.8%) junior teachers claimed *very important* and 2 (33.3%) junior teachers claimed *hardly* important and 7 (17.9%) senior teachers thought *fairly* important and 16 (18%) senior teachers believed *important* and 13 (27.7%) senior teachers stated *very important* and 2 (33.3%) institute teachers believed *hardly* important and 19 (48.7%) institute teachers believed that it is *fairly* important and 24 (27%) institute teachers believed *important* and 3 (6.4%) institute teachers believed that it is *very important* and 4 (10.3%) university teachers believed *fairly* important and 10 (11.2%) university teachers believed *important* and 9 university teachers (19.1%) out of 47 believed *very important* and the (M= 3.97, SD= .78; R= 3). With this item, the c^2(3, N= 181) = 22.913, p= .000 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among teachers in four setting in this regard.

Regarding helping the learners developing feeling of confidence in their ability to learn, 7 (43.8%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 34(52.3%) junior teachers believed *important* and 31(31.6%) junior teachers junior teachers believed *very important* and 2 (100%) senior teachers believed *hardly* important and 4 (25%) senior teachers believe *fairly* and 10 (15.4%) senior teachers believed that *important* and 22 (22.4%) senior teachers believed *very important* and 3 (18.8%) institute teachers believed *fairly* important and 14 (21.5%) institute teachers believed *important* and 31 (31.6%) institute teachers stated *very important* and 2 (12.5%) university teachers stated *fairly* important and 7(10.8%) university teachers believed *important* and 14 (14.3%) university teachers believed *very important* and the (M= 4.43, SD= .70; R= 3). With this item, the c^2 (4, N=181) = 15.308, p= .083 > .05 reveals that there is no significant difference in this regard.

Concerning teaching the learners the strategies they need to operate effectively, 13 (52%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 23 (32.4%) junior teachers believed *important* and 35 (41.7%) junior teachers believed *very important* and 3 (12%) senior teachers believed *fairly* important and 14 (19.7%) senior teachers believed *important* and 21 (25.5%) senior teachers claimed *very important* and 7 (28%) institute teachers believed *fairly* important and 24 (33.4%) institute teachers believed *important* and 17 (20%) institute teachers believed *very important* and 2 (8%) university teachers believed *fairly* and 11 (13.1%) university teachers believed *very important* and the (M= 4.31, SD= .72; R= 3). With this item, the c^2 (5, N= 181) = 8.404, p= .494 > .05 shows that there is no significant difference among EFL teachers in four different setting.

In terms of teaching the learners to set their own goals, 2 (28.6%) junior teachers believed *hardly* important and 15 (41.7%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 31 (37.8%) junior teachers believed *important* and 24 (42.9%) junior teachers (42.9%) believed *very important* and 8 (22.2%) senior teachers believed *fairly* important and 13 (15.9%) senior teachers claimed *important* and 17 (30.4%) senior teachers remarked *very important* and 4 (57.1%) institute teachers believed *hardly* and 9 (25%) institute teachers believed *fairly* important and 23 (28%) institute teachers *important* and 12 (21.41%) institute teachers believed *very important* and 1 (14.3%) university teachers believed *important* and 4 (11.1%) university teachers believed *fairly* important and 15 (18.3%) university teachers claimed *important* and 3 (5.4%) university teachers believed *very important* (M= 4.03, SD= .81; R=3). With this item, the c^2 (6, N= 181) = 12.939, p= .165 > .05 shows that there is no significant difference among EFL teachers teaching in four different setting.

Concerning helping the learners set challenge to meet, 3 (30%) junior teachers believed *hardly* important and 12 (26.7%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 38 (48.7%) junior teachers believed *important* and 19 (41.3%) junior teachers believed *very important* and 2 (20%) senior teachers believed *hardly* and 8 (17.8%) senior teachers claimed *fairly* important and 12 (15.4%) senior teachers believed *important* and 16 (34.8%) senior teachers believed *very important* and 1 (50%) institute teacher believed *not at all important* and 2 (20%) institute teachers believed *hardly* important and 15 (33.3%) institute teachers claimed *fairly* important and 25 (32.1%) institute teachers believed *important* and 5 (10.9%) institute teachers claimed *very important* and 1 (50%) university teacher believed *not at all important* and 3 (30%) university teachers believed *hardly* and 10 (22.2%) university teachers out believed *fairly* important and 3 (3.8%) university teachers believed *important* and 6 (13%) university teachers believed *very important* and the (M= 3.86, SD= .89; R= 4). With this item, , the c^2 (7, N= 181) = 29.640, p= .003 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among EFL teachers in four different setting.

Regarding helping learners monitor changes, 3 (42.9%) junior teachers (42.9%) believed *hardly* important and 20 (35.1%) junior teachers believed *fairly* important and 27 (40.9%) junior teachers claimed *important* and 22 junior teachers believed *very important* and 2 (28.6%) senior teachers believed *hardly* important and 7 (12.3%) senior teachers believed *fairly* important and 12 (18.2%) senior teachers believed *important* and 17 (34.7%) senior teachers believed *very important* and 1 (50%) institute teacher believed *not at all important* and 23 (40.4%) institute teachers believed *fairly* important and 17 (25.8%) institute teachers believed *important* and 7 (14.3%) institute teachers believed *very important* and 1 (50%) university teacher believed *not at all important* and 2 (28%) university teachers believed *hardly* important and 7 (12.3%) university teachers believed *fairly*

important and 10 (15.2%) university teachers believed ***important*** and 3 (6.1%) university teachers believed ***very important*** and the (M=3.84, SD= .90; R= 4). With this item, the c^2 (8, N= 181) = 23.503, p= .024 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among EFL teachers in four different settings.

Regarding helping learners notice that through persistence they can find solution to problems, 2 (40%) junior teachers believed ***hardly*** important and 8 (25.8%) junior teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 37 (42.5%) junior teachers believed ***important*** and 25 (43.1) junior teachers believed ***very important*** and 1 (20%) senior teachers believed ***hardly*** important and 4 (12.1%) senior teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 14 (16.1%) senior teachers believed ***important*** and 19 (32.8%) senior teachers believed ***very important*** and 13 (41.9%) institute teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 26 (29.9%) institute teachers stated ***important*** and 9 (15.5%) institute teachers claimed ***very important*** and 2 (40%) university teachers stated ***hardly*** important and 6 (19.4%) university teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 10 (11.5%) university teachers (11.5%) stated ***important*** and 5 (8.6%) university teachers (8.6%) out of 58 stated ***very important*** and the (M= 4.09, SD= .77; R= 3) and the c^2 (9, N= 181) = 19.832, p= .020 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among EFLTs in four different settings.

Regarding teaching the learners to work cooperatively, 1 (33.3%) junior teacher stated ***hardly*** important and 8 (33.3%) junior teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 29 (43.3%) junior teachers claimed ***important*** and 34 (39.5%) junior teachers stated ***very important*** and 2 (66.7%) senior teachers stated ***hardly*** important and 7 (29.2%) senior teachers remarked ***fairly*** important and 6 (9%) senior teachers stated ***important*** and 23 (26.7%) senior teachers stated ***very important*** and 2 (29.2%) institute teachers believed ***fairly*** important and 20 (17.9%) institute teachers ***important*** and 26 (3.5%) institute teachers stated ***very important*** and 1 (100%) university teacher stated ***not at all important*** and 7 (29.2%) university teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 12 (17.9%) university teachers stated ***important*** and 3 (3.5%) university teachers stated ***very important*** and the (M= 4.29, SD= .80; R= 4), and the c^2 (10, N= 181) = 34.277, p= .001 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among EFLT in four different levels.

Regarding helping the learners develop as individual, 2 (50%) junior school teachers stated ***not at all important*** and 4 (44.4) junior teachers stated ***hardly*** important and 13 (32.5%) junior teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 30 (35.7%) junior teachers stated ***important*** and 23 (52.3%) junior teachers stated ***very important*** and 1 (25%) senior teacher stated ***not at all important*** and 3 (33.3%) senior teachers stated ***hardly*** important and 6 (15%) senior teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 21 (25%) senior teachers stated ***important*** and 7 (15.9%) senior teachers stated ***very important*** and 1 (25%) institute teacher stated ***not at all important*** and 1 (11.1%) institute teacher stated ***hardly*** and 11 (27.5%) institute teachers stated ***fairly*** important and 22

(26.2%) institute teachers stated **important** and 13 (29.5%) institute teachers claimed **very important** and 1 (11.1%) university teacher stated **hardly** important and 10 (25%) university teachers stated **fairly** important and 11(13.1%) university teachers stated **important** and 1 (2.3%) university teacher stated **very important**. The (M= 3.65, SD= .90; R= 4) and the c^2 (11, N= 181) = 15.356, p= .223 > .05 shows that there is no significant difference among EFLTs in four different teaching settings in terms of helping them develop as individual.

Concerning helping learners foster a sense of belonging, 2 (66.7%) junior teachers (66.7%) stated **hardly** important and 9 (27.3) junior teachers stated **fairly** important and 28 (38.9%) junior teachers stated **important** and 33 (45.8%) junior teachers stated **very important** and 6 (18.2%) senior teachers (18.2%) stated **fairly** important and 11 (15.3%) senior teachers stated **important** and 21 (29.2%) senior teachers (29.2%) stated **very important** and 8 (24.2%) institute teachers stated **fairly** important and 25 (34.7%) institute teachers stated **important** and 15 (20.8%) institute teachers stated **very important** and 1(100%) university teacher stated **not at all important** and 1 (33.3%) university teacher stated **hardly** important and 10 (30.3) university teachers stated **fairly** important and 8 (11.1%) university teachers stated **important** and 3 (4.2%) university teachers stated **very important** and the (M= 4.16, SD= .81; R= 4). With this item, the c^2 (12, N= 181) = 30.442, p= .002 < .05 shows that there is a significant difference among EFLT in four different settings in terms of fostering a sense of belonging in the learners.

As shown in Table 2, 12 (75%) stated that sometimes teachers and sometimes learners through teachers' guidance should assess their learning and 15 (93.75%) believed that teachers assessment should be temporary and 4 (25%) asserted that learners are unable; therefore, only teachers should assess learners' learning.

Table 2. Results of Oral Interview with Institute Teachers Assessment of Learners' Learning in the View of Institute Teachers

	Factors/ Q1	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sometimes teachers and sometimes learners should assess through teachers' help	12	75%
2	Teachers should base their assessment on learners' increase competence and with increased ability; teachers' role should be delivered to learner.	15	93.75%
3	Learners are unable so only teachers should assess	4	25%

An MA male teacher with 26 years old and four years of experience from Rasht city stated that:

> Teacher B is right but the situation should be appropriate, too. As sometimes the books or materials used in a classroom and students' backgrounds stop the teacher to play its role well and assist the students to assess themselves and students cannot reach to the state of self-assessment that they are supposed to reach.

Table 3 renders the results of oral interview with institute teachers in terms of cooperation and individualization as far as the oral interview is concerned. 15 (93.75%) institute teachers claimed that they foster both cooperation and individualization in the learners, one (6.25%) stated that they only promote cooperation and individualization, 15 (93.75%) claimed that they apply group work to boost cooperation and individual work to burgeon individualization, three (18.75%) noted that they utilize competition to improve individualization and finally, two (12.50%) indicated that they decide according to context, level, and personality type which one to take into the consideration.

Table 3. Cooperation and Individualization in Perspective of Institute Teachers

	Factors/ Q2	Frequency	Percentage
1	Both cooperation and individualization	15	93.75%
2	Only cooperation	1	6.25%
3	Group work to foster cooperation and individual work to boost individualization	15	93.75%
4	Creating competition to promote individualization	3	18.75%
5	Context, level, personality type determine which to select	2	12.50%

One MA male institute teachers being 25 years old and 5 years of teaching in Ardabil city stated that:

> I agree with teacher B because cooperation and individualization together make a balance in learning but I myself prefer individuation in tasks done by trainees because it increases self-confidence in the trainees and it also makes them believe their ability and to develop cooperation, I use group work and pair work.

4.2 Results of oral interview with university instructors

As shown in Table 4, two university instructors (10%) believed that teachers should asses their learners, eight instructors (40%) stated that learners through teachers' guidance should assess, ten instructors (50%) noted that sometimes teachers and sometimes learners should assess, seven instructors (35%) claimed that teachers skills are helpful in directing learners toward self-assessment, seven instructors (35%) indicated that learners' level

determine who should assess, and three instructors (15%) remarked that teachers should teach learners how to assess.

Table 4. Assessment of Learners' Learning in the View of University Teachers

Factors/Q1		frequency	Percentage
1	Only teachers	2	10%
2	Learners through teachers guidance	8	40%
3	Some cases teachers and sometimes learners	10	50%
4	Teachers' skills are conductive in moving learners' toward self-assessment	7	35%
5	Learners' level determines who should assess	7	35%
6	Teacher should teach them how to asses	3	15%

In regard with it, a female teacher being 25 years old and 2 years of teaching in university of Guilan mentioned that:

> Both teachers are right. That the teacher should decide who should assess the learning depends on the level, age, and proficiency of the learners. At the beginning they cannot self-assess their learning so I assess them but when they become advanced and developed, I help them to assess themselves. I believe that learners' ability to assess themselves should be boosted with sufficient strategies training.

As shown in Table 5, three (15%) stated that they only foster cooperation, 16 (80%) asserted that they foster both cooperation and individualization, 14 (70%) illuminated that they utilize group work to improve cooperation, eight (40%) indicated that they use competition and individual presentation to boost individualization, and two (10%) believed that they base contextual factors and gender to select one or both of them.

Table 5. Cooperation and Individualization in Perspective of University Teachers

Factors/Q2		Frequency	Percentage
1	Only cooperation	3	15%
2	Both cooperation and individualization	16	80%
3	Group work to boost cooperation	14	70%
4	Competition and individual presentation	8	40%
5	Contextual factors and gender are conductive in selection of them	2	10%

Regarding cooperation and individuation, one male teacher with 35 years old and 12 years of teaching in Tehran remarked that:

I believed that context differs. Boys are different from girls. An amount of cooperation and teamwork is needed and vital and can improve their learning but competition can also improve students' efforts and help them do their best. Choosing two students with near competencies will inevitably bring about competition and assigning them to do group and team work will help them develop cooperation.

4.3 Results of oral interview with junior high school teachers

As shown in Table 6, two (11.76%) junior teachers stated only they assess, 13 (76.47%) believed learners through teachers' guidance should assess their learning, two (11.76%) remarked sometimes teachers and sometimes learners should assess, five (29.41%) asserted that teachers should move toward self-assessment gradually and in step, and three (17.64) stated that students' level and cooperative nature is the basis to decide about the assessor.

Table 6. Assessment of Learners' Learning in the View of Seventeen Junior High School Teachers

	Factors/Q1	Frequency	Percentage
1	Only teachers should assess	2	11.76%
2	Learners through teachers' assistance	13	76.47%
3	Sometimes teachers and sometimes learners should assess	2	11.76%
4	Self-assessment should develop gradually and in steps	5	29.41%
5	Students' level and cooperative nature determine whether teachers or learners should assess	3	17.64%

One male teacher being 26 and with 5 years of teaching stated that:

> I prefer teacher B because some guidance on behalf of teacher to learner in order to assess their learning is needed. But they are the learners who should learn and experience how to assess their learning and behavior and the teacher should train them how to monitor their behavior inside and outside the classroom.

According to Table 7, one (5.88%) stated only cooperation, 16 (94.11%) expressed both cooperation and individualization and to boost cooperation, seven (41.17%) suggested group, pair work, and information gap and to foster individualization, six (35.29%) noted they decide according to type of task which one to be included, and two (11.76%), too, suggested competition to improve individualization.

Table 7. Cooperation and Individualization in Perspective of Seventeen Junior High School Teachers

Factors/Q2		Frequency	Percentage
1	Only cooperation	1	5.88%
2	Both cooperation and individualization	16	94.11%
3	Group work, pair work, information gap	7	41.17%
4	Task type determines which one be preferred	6	35.29%
5	Use of competition to boost individualization	2	11.76%

One male teacher being 39 and 17 years of teaching in junior school of Masal stated that:

> I try to develop both individuality and cooperation in the learners because increase of cooperation among learners that will exclude teachers' centrality and improve learners' centeredness. To develop cooperation, I use group and pair work and to develop individuation, I use individual activity.

4.4 Results of oral interview with senior high school teachers

In line with Table 8, thirteen (68.42%) stated that learners through teachers guidance should assess, six (31.57%) believed that sometimes teachers and sometimes learners should assess, twelve (63.15%) indicated that teachers should deliver assessment to learners in steps, and four (21.05%) noted that level, background knowledge, and type of activity determine who should assess.

Table 8. Assessment of Learners' Learning in the View of Nineteen Senior High School Teachers

Factors/Q1		Frequency	Percentage
1	Only teachers	0	0%
2	Learners' through teachers assistance	13	68.42%
3	Both teachers and learners	6	31.57%
4	Teachers should deliver assessment to learners step by step	12	63.15%
5	Level, background knowledge, type of activity	4	21.05%

One female teacher being 36 and with 7 years of teaching in Tehran city remarked that:

> For sure sometimes learners need teachers' help in order to explore the best way to progress and in some cases teachers should assess the

learners based on the type of assessment which require technical measures.

Table 9 indicates that one (5.26%) stated only cooperation, 18 (94.73%) believed that both cooperation and individualization should be considered, 11 (57.89%) mentioned that they use group and pair work to promote cooperation, two (10.52%) applied competition, and four (21.05%) use individual activities to prosper individualization.

Table 9. Cooperation and Individualization in Perspective of Nineteen Senior High School Teachers

Factors/Q2		Frequency	Percentage
1	Only cooperation	1	5.26%
2	Both cooperation and individualization	18	94.73%
3	Group work and pair work to foster cooperation	11	57.89%
4	Competition to develop individualization	2	10.52%
5	Individual activities	4	21.05%

One male teacher being 36 and eight years of teaching in Fouman stated that:

> I agree with teacher A. To develop cooperation in the learners, I use group work, pair work, and class discussion. For example, I assign them some tasks that should be completed with each other's help and to complete the task, they have to cooperate together and to share their views.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

RQ1. Is there any difference among EFL instructors in terms of their mediative knowledge across four different contexts?

Investigation of results of survey and Chi-square, shows that in seven items of mediative questionnaire such as making the instruction clear, explaining to the learners how to an activity, helping them monitor changes, encouraging them to set challenge, helping them persist to find solutions, teaching them to work cooperatively, and fostering a sense of belonging in the learners, the p-value ($p < .05$) is lower than alpha level, therefore, there exists a significant difference among EFLTs in terms of their mediative knowledge; as such, there exist relationships between different contexts and mediative knowledge since the needs of different contexts and the rate and amount differences in terms of mediative knowledge will not be the same. Among the already-mentioned seven mediative features, making the instruction clear, working cooperatively, persisting to find solutions, and fostering a sense of belonging to community show more variation in comparison to others and the reason of

such variation is that in four different contexts, factors such as learners' level, age, background knowledge, the kind of needs to some mediative features, teachers' perceptions of the learners in different contexts, and different expectation of learners, parents, educational community would influence EFL instructors' choice of mediative features across contexts. Thus, in lower level of education such as junior high school and beginner levels in institute, learners need more clarification of instruction rather than upper and advanced level and even the task type in terms of complexity or the type of teachers' expectation regarding the task is conductive in the amount of instruction provision.

Regarding cooperation, the contexts are very conclusive because the age of learners will influence their cooperation and usually teachers in lower level are more inclined to suggest group work or institute teachers' might require to have more knowledge of this mediative feature due to contextual needs and classroom culture and climate because any context of teaching suggests its own degree of cooperation; furthermore, in the context of university, the instructors might focus their attention on some other features and in some cases personality types of learners make the teachers to decide in a certain way. For example, lower level learners due to their fragile personality might need more assistance to become persistence in order to try hard to find solutions to problems while upper and advanced learners might have sufficient self-confidence; as a result, they might need less assistance and scaffolding in comparison to lower-level learners. Any context of teaching is a community the members which are interdependent and the learning and teaching depend on teachers' familiarity with how to deal in the community and learning does not happen in vacuum (Bakhtin, 1984; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In other five mediative items, e.g., boosting individualization, setting their own goal, teaching the strategy, developing feeling of competence, and telling reasons of doing an activity, the p-value is larger than alpha level; therefore, there exists no significant difference among EFLTs across contexts.

RQ2. In the perspectives of EFL instructors in Iran, who should assess the learners and what strategies EFL instructors think are conductive in actualization of such beliefs?

In response to RQ2, based on the results of table 2, 4, 6, and 8, a limited percentage of teachers in institutes, universities, and junior high school stated that they only themselves assess their learners' learning while senior teachers stated that they do not assess learners by themselves. Among those who stated that they themselves assess the learners and the learners are not competent enough to self-assess, the institute teachers are the first, junior high school teachers are the second and university teachers are the third. The percentage of the teachers who claimed they guide their learners to self-

assess is not consistent among four groups. To compare them, junior and senior high school teachers stated that they mostly help their learners self-assess their learning and though university teachers, too, stated that they help their learners self-assess; however, their percentage is less than junior and senior high school teachers and institute teachers mostly stated that they apply both teachers' views in the scenario. As such, institute teachers sometimes themselves assess the learners and sometimes they trust the learners; consequently, they help them self-assess their learning while other three groups of teachers such as junior, senior and university teachers are not equal in line with teacher's B view, helping learners self-assess, and among these three groups, university teachers are more in line with assisting the learners to self-assess. Among four groups of teachers, senior, junior, and university teachers stated that their learners' levels, backgrounds, and their cooperative nature determine whether the learners or the teacher should assess. Although these three groups did so, the share of each group of teachers is not the same and to rank them, university teachers are the first, senior high teachers are the second, and junior school teachers are the third and almost all institute teachers stated that teachers' intervention in the process of assessment is needed but their intervention should be temporary and when they see their learners are competent enough, they should deliver the assessment to the learners. To conclude, EFL instructors' perspectives in terms of assessment match with the ideas of a number of scholars (see Vygotsky's, 1978; Feuerstein's 1980, 1990; Walqui's, 2006; Lidz & Elliot's, 2000) regarding assessment and providing scaffolding while the missing link in the EFL instructors' view is related to what followers of dynamic assessment name testing-teaching-retesting circle which help teachers notice whether they have improved or they need more mediation.

RQ3. What perspectives do EFL instructors in Iran have in terms of cooperation and individualization?

In response to RQ3, based on table 3, 5, 7, and 9, a limited percentage of EFLTs stated that they only boost cooperation. In this respect, the percentage of university teachers is more than junior, senior, and institute teachers but almost most teachers in senior, junior, institute, and university teachers stated that they develop both cooperation and individualization. Although the percentage of senior, junior, and institute teachers in this respect is nearly the same, the percentage of university teachers is less than the three afore-said groups of teachers. To elaborate more, 94.73% of senior high school teachers, 94.11% of junior high school teachers, and 93.75% of institute teachers claimed that they promote both cooperation and individualization whereas, 80% of university instructors indicated that they promote both cooperation and individualization. To foster cooperation, all four groups of teachers suggested group and pair works whereas the percentage of group work

application is not consistent. The highest percentage belongs to institute teachers and then university, senior, and junior teachers are second, third, and fourth in rank. Although the four groups of teachers suggested competition to foster individualization, in comparison to institute, senior, and junior teachers, university teachers apply more competition to develop individualization. The findings of this study in terms of cooperation and individualization are in line with Feuerstein's (1980, 1991) and William and Burden's (1997) views on the basis of which they believed that both should be fostered in the learners. In this respect, Williams and Burden (1997, p. 78) indicated that "at the same time learning to co-operate, people need to be individuals, to feel they can legitimately think and feel differently from others, to develop and exercise their own personality. This is sometimes referred to as individualization, which means a growing awareness of one's own unique place in and contribution to a social world".

6 Implications

The current study investigated to what degree different contexts of teaching influence EFL instructors' mediative knowledge. The findings of closed-questionnaire showed that there exist significant differences among EFL instructors in seven mediative items across contexts; as a result, the role of context is conductive in EFL instructors' mediative knowledge because each context being a unique community of people with its own special needs, level, and social climate and structure will require certain mediative knowledge whereas there exist no significant differences among EFL instructors in five mediative items. Findings of oral interview regarding assessment revealed that EFL instructors across the contexts believed that learners by themselves are unable to self-assess; however, being scaffolded, they will become competent to self-assess and as the findings showed even EFL instructors' scaffolding should be temporary and these notions about assessment is congruent with the notion of mediation and scaffolding which intend to move learners toward their potentials. Regarding cooperation and individualization, EFL instructors across contexts believed that both of them should be improved although some variations might exist among them. To boost cooperation, they suggested group and pair work and to improve individualization, they suggested competition and individual activities. To have knowledge about context of teaching and learners' needs will result in adaptation of EFL instructors' mediative knowledge across the contexts. As such, learners in different context will not be blamed for lack of ability and inclination for learning and they will not be categorized on the basis of their presupposed level of knowledge and all of them will be considered educable due to their cognitive elasticity. Moreover, learners' potentials in self-assessment will be taken into the account and to develop learners to operate thoroughly both as an individual and as member of whole community, both

cooperation and individualization should be boosted. Finally, curricula, syllabi, and coursebooks should be designed in a way that they can help the instructor to be harmonious with the various needs and requirements of different contexts.

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