Mediation Strategies in L2 Learning from Sociocultural Perspective: A Comparative Analysis of Empirical Studies

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Abstract: This paper evaluates the role of mediation strategies in second language learning (L2 learning), through analyzing two empirical studies about L2 learning. Both studies align with Sociocultural Theory's core tenet that L2 development originates from socially mediated interactions. The comparative analysis reveals three key commonalities in mediation strategies: mediation serves as a critical bridge transforming external social interactions; effective mediation adheres to the "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)-aligned" principle, with strategies tailored to learners' current L2 proficiency; mediation is a multi-agent system involving teachers, peers, tools, and learners themselves, rather than a teacher-centric process. Nonetheless, the two studies diverge in core goals, mediator roles, strategy implementation, adaptation to learners,and learner's responses to linguistic contexts due to distinct sociolinguistic contexts and learner characteristics. According to the comparative analysis, three highly feasible mediation strategies for L2 learners are distilled: engaging in multi-agent interactive mediation, adopting ZPD-aligned context mediation, and practicing self-mediation for regulation. This study not only deepens the understanding of the mediating mechanism in L2 learning from the SCT perspective but also provides empirical references for designing adaptive mediation strategies in L2 teaching, improving teaching efficiency, as well as enhancing learner's language proficiency.

Keywords: second language acquisition; mediation strategies; sociocultural theory; L2 learning

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex, interdisciplinary field of study which has its roots in subjects as varied as cognition and psychology to social applications and actions in anthropology and sociology (Han & Nassaji, 2019). Its complexity stems from the multifaceted nature of language learning, which involves not just the acquisition of linguistic structures but also the integration of these structures into real-world communication. Language, as both a cognitive system and a social practice, demands attention to how learners process information internally, how they interact with others in the target language, and how cultural contexts shape their use of language. This interplay of factors means that understanding SLA requires examining everything from the neural mechanisms of vocabulary retention to the ways community norms influence conversational patterns.

In SLA, learning of L2 vocabulary and grammar is a first step in language learning; once this milestone is covered, L2 learners need to know when and how to use these to convey certain meanings in specific situations (Hymes, 1972). Mastering vocabulary and grammar provides the foundational tools, but true proficiency emerges when learners can adapt these tools to fit social contexts. For example, knowing the past tense of verbs is essential, but recognizing when to use it to share a personal experience versus when to avoid it in a casual greeting requires an understanding of situational norms. This shift from formal knowledge to practical application often proves

challenging, as learners must navigate not just linguistic rules but also the unspoken conventions that govern communication. L2 learners may find it challenging to deal or communicate with L1 speakers because it may vary significantly from what they already know in their mother tongue. It may be essential, then, for L2 learners to clarify aspects of speech (e.g., intonation, certain idioms, etc.) to learn and develop new skills in order to meet these higher standards (Negueruela Azarola & Garcia, 2016). During interactions with others, the L2 learner has access to language forms and functions that are normally exclusively accessible to the latter.

One of the oldest and most influential ideas in SLA comes from the sociocultural perspective and, in particular, the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Over a century in the past, Vygotsky embarked on a quest to intertwine what seemed like separate realms of society, culture, and thought, through his overarching, broad-spectrum theory known as Sociocultural Theory (SCT). At the core of SCT is the belief that human development, including language learning, is not an isolated, internal process but a social one. Higher mental functions, such as reasoning and language use, originate in social interaction and are gradually internalized as individual abilities. This perspective shifts focus from the learner alone to the dynamic between the learner and their social environment, emphasizing that learning thrives in collaborative contexts where guidance and support are available.

SCT offers a unique theoretical framework that relies on diverse conceptions of human development emphasizing the integrated nature of individual elements in the learning process (Masuda & Arnett, 2015) and stresses context-based language learning providing practical implications for L2 instruction. By highlighting the role of social interaction and cultural tools in learning, SCT underscores that L2 development cannot be separated from the contexts in which it occurs. Whether through teacher guidance, peer collaboration, or engagement with cultural artifacts like books or digital media, learners use these external resources to build their linguistic competence. This focus on context-based learning makes SCT particularly relevant for L2 instruction, as it encourages pedagogical practices that immerse learners in meaningful communication, helping them not just to learn the language but to use it as a tool for participation in social and cultural life.

Theoretical Background

SCT argues that cognition is not a purely psychological process but is instead a process mediated by cultural artifacts and activities such as interaction (Vygotsky, 1986). While this theory aims to provide a wide-ranging, general theory for human learning and cognition, it has been adapted in SLA in a few key areas, in particular, in particular, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky claimed that learning is essentially a mediated process, and that a learner's abilities at any point in time can be understood as three layers: (1) what the learner can do unaided, (2) what the learner can do with mediation, and (3) what the learner cannot do, even with mediation. It is this middle tier of ability, i.e., what the learner can do with mediation, that Vygotsky identified as the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1986). The Mediation Theory states that the most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated, and that sociocultural approach is essentially a "theory of the mind" (Lantolf, 2000), maintaining "learning as a mediated external, not just a mental internal phenomenon" (Ellis, 2015, p.221). It explores the social roots of human thinking, or in other words, how social learning mediates cognitive development. This theoretical notion of ZPD and, in particular, the use of mediation strategies in the form of social interaction to increase learning and expand individual knowledge is the basis of the following empirical studies reviewed for this paper.

Sociocultural Theory and Teacher's Mediation

Vygotsky (1978) saw the child as first doing things in a social context, helped in various ways by other people and language, and gradually shifting away from reliance on others to independent thinking and action. This approach to children's mental development highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping the most favorable conditions for enhancing and regulating their development. Vygotsky's theory of learning and development has been transformed and adapted to different educational frameworks, including the L2 class.room (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009; Lantolf &

Thorne 2006). Such adaptations perceive the institutional context, such as a school, as a formative setting for the child's developmental process. In the particular setting of the bilingual classroom, children ac.quire their L2 abilities through interaction with teachers and peers.

In this paper, we explored how major theoretical principles and concepts included in Vygotsky's mediation strategies scaffolding, identification of the child's zone of proximal development, and modeling are realized in the teachers' strategies aimed at encouraging L2 acquisition in the bilingual classroom.

Mediation Strategies

The ability to learn through interaction and mediation is characteristic of human intelligence. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the notion of the human mediator and emphasized that "what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (p. 211). In a whole range of ways, adults mediate and make the world accessible to children. With the help of adults and peers, children can do and understand much more than on their own.A substantial number of studies have focused on mediation strategies provided by teachers in L2 classrooms, The focus was on strategies such as corrective feedback and its relation to L2 acquisition (e.g., Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013), imitation (Ohta, 200l; Saville Troike, 1988), and the zone of proximal development (e.g, Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 2001). Most of these studies drew on observations of students in secondary L2 classrooms. For that reason, our knowledge on how teachers realize main principles and concepts of mediation among preschool children is very limited (but see, for example, Gort & Pontier, 2012).

Teacher's Identification of Student's Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky (1978) defined the "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 cooperation with more capable peers" (p.86). He considered the ZPD as referring to the well-known fact that "with collaboration, direction, or some kind of help the child is always able to do more and solve more difficult tasks than he can independently" (p.209). Thus, teacher-children interaction provides conditions for identifying the child's ZPD and the extent to which the child has actually developed (Chaiklin, 2003). Skillful teachers are very "tuned-in" to their classroom students and can evaluate each child's ZPD. In other words, to activate the "zone", the child's developmental space, the teacher needs to recognize what is known and unknown to the children, and to mediate development by making them aware of what is unknown versus known (Kohler, 2015). This awareness is applied both in lesson planning and in how teachers talk to students minute by minute.

Detailed Review of Empirical Studies

The studies chosen for this analysis around SCT generally and focus on the mediation strategies specifically. While each study takes a different approach to connect language learning to the Vygotskian concept of mediation in the ZPD, they are all unified in their adoption of Vygotsky's (1986) definitions of mediation. While each of the accounts varies slightly on what qualifies as mediation, the analyses sampled for this paper all use the same basis for their findings, making each a unique yet similar example of the impact of SCT on SLA research.

In the first study of this paper, "There is No Need for Translation: She Understands: Teachers' Mediation Strategies in a Bilingual Preschool Classroom" by Mila Schwartz and Naomi Gorbatt, the study explored how major theoretical principles and concepts in the mediation strategies of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory are realized in an Arabic-Hebrew preschool in Israel, aiming at examining how teachers encourage children to use their second language (L2) during teacher- child conversations, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the type of language mediation that occurs during learning events and free communication between teachers and children in a bilingual preschool.

The authors first introduced the background of the research. Israel is officially a bilingual nation, with Hebrew and Arabic as its state languages. However, a clear functional asymmetry exists between them. Hebrew serves as the dominant language across most societal domains, including government, media, and popular culture. In

contrast, Arabic, although the mother tongue of roughly one-fifth of the Israeli population, is a minority language in terms of institutional support and daily usage prevalence. For L1 Arabic-speaking children, Hebrew is learned as a second language (L2) from the second or third grade onward within the school curriculum, continuing until twelfth grade. Meanwhile, L1 Hebrew-speaking children have limited daily exposure to Arabic. This is due to long-standing social tensions between Arab and Jewish communities, which has led to a pattern of largely separate living and cultural environments. Such separation results in restricted Arabic language input for Hebrew-speaking children, reducing their motivation to learn Arabic. The Center for Bilingual Education, established in 1997 to promote bilingual and bicultural education and mutual respect from early childhood, operates a target bilingual preschool (founded in 2004) with a two-way language program teaching both Hebrew and Arabic. However, there is limited research on how teachers mediate to enhance the minority Arabic's status and promote language socialization in early L1/L2 acquisition stages, so this study aims to examine teachers' mediation strategies in this bilingual preschool learning environment.

Given the cultural background, this study, set in the bilingual Arabic-Hebrew preschool context in Israel, selected two preschools within the network of the Center for Bilingual Education as the research sites. For participants, it involved teachers from these preschools, specifically, pairs of teachers (one Arab, one Jewish) in each class, as well as young children in the early stages of L1 (Hebrew or Arabic) and L2 (the other language) acquisition. In terms of the research method, the authors employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach, including classroom observations to record teachers' instructional strategies and interactions related to mediating the minority language (Arabic) learning, combined with teacher reflections and interviews. Through these means, they analyzed how teachers implemented mediation strategies to address the need of elevating the socially weaker minority language within the framework of the bilingual preschool environment, aiming to understand the mechanisms of language socialization and minority language promotion in early childhood bilingual education.

The analysis first categorized observed mediation strategies (e.g., language modeling, avoidance of direct translation) from observational records. Then, it triangulated these with interview data: researchers coded and interpreted teachers' reflections to contextualize strategy use, examining how behaviors aligned with goals of promoting the minority language (Arabic) and fostering cross-cultural socialization. By integrating qualitative coding of strategies and thematic analysis of teacher narratives, the study unpacked the mechanisms of instructional mediation in the bilingual preschool setting, highlighting how specific practices addressed linguistic status inequalities and supported early L2 acquisition.

Finally, The study concludes that teachers' mediation strategies, including purposeful avoidance of direct translation, modeling of minority-language (Arabic) use, and peer-expert facilitation, effectively activate young learners' ZPD, promoting minority-language acquisition and cross-cultural socialization in the bilingual preschool context. These strategies mitigate linguistic status inequalities, though challenges persist due to the broader sociopolitical marginalization of Arabic in Israel. For future research, the study calls for longitudinal investigations tracking strategy impacts on learners' long-term language proficiency and intergroup attitudes, as well as explorations of digital tools' potential to enhance minority-language mediation. Expanding the scope to diverse bilingual educational settings worldwide could further refine understanding of how mediation bridges sociocultural divides and fosters equitable language learning.

In the second study sampled for this paper, "Use of Language Learning Strategies among Learners of Chinese as a Second Language from the Perspective of Mediation Theory", Lu Chen (2021) conducted a research on the Chinese learning strategies of overseas students in a provincial university in central China, aiming at exploring the characteristics of Chinese learning strategies used by international students, the individual differences in the use of Chinese learning strategies by international students, and the factors that affect the use of Chinese learning strategies by overseas students. In her study, quantitative and qualitative methods, including questionnaire survey

and semi-structured interview were adopted to collect data. Sociological statistical software SPSS 22.0 was used to conduct descriptive analysis and independent sample t-test for quantitative data.

The author first discussed the theoretical basis of sociocultural mediation theory and its connection with L2 Chinese learning strategies, citing research from Vygotsky (1978), Oxford (1990), and relevant domestic scholars in the field of Chinese as a second language (CSL) research. However, the majority of the literature review in this master's thesis focused on the application of learning strategies in CSL and the uniqueness of Chinese language learning. The author quoted Vygotsky directly, highlighting that "human mental activity is essentially a mediated process" (Vygotsky, 1978). Chen went on to connect the sociocultural mediation theory to the actual learning process of CSL learners, wherein learning strategies first emerge in social interactions, such as communication with teachers and peers, then are internalized at the individual cognitive level, which she analyzed in terms of the "appropriation" process in sociocultural theory. The researcher then explained the classification system of learning strategies, highlighting the integration of sociocultural elements such as the role of important others, cultural artifacts, into the analysis of CSL learning strategies.

After drawing on the classifications proposed by Lantolf (2000) (significant others, self-mediation, and cultural quality), this study ultimately divides the framework of Mediation Theory into seven categories: significant others, self-mediation, cultural quality, learning contexts, rule mediation, community mediation, and role mediation. Chen defined the research scope and objectives in line with her study focus, outlining the roles of various mediation factors, including important others, self-mediation, cultural artifacts, etc., in the use of CSL learning strategies, summing up her argument setting that sociocultural mediation theory provides a comprehensive framework to understand how CSL learners use strategies in social-cognitive interactive processes. Tying this to the research, Chen noted that "exploring the diverse mediation factors and their impacts on CSL learning strategy use is at its core--a process that unfolds in the interactive activities between learners and their social and cultural environments". This study claimed that the use of CSL learning strategies is crucially influenced by sociocultural mediation provided by various elements in the learning context. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and data from the learning behaviors of CSL learners in a provincial university in central China were used to analyze the characteristics and influencing factors of learning strategy use.

The author went on to present a detailed analysis of strategy use differences in terms of individual variables, such as gender, length of study, as well as the regulatory role of mediation factors. According to the analysis of strategy use patterns with each learner group, there was a clear progression in strategy application as learners' Chinese proficiency improved, including changes in the use of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, etc. Learners received different levels of mediation support,such as from teachers' instructions to peers' assistance, and as a result, their ability to self-regulate learning strategies developed, leading to a transformation in the dependence on external mediation over time.

Finally, under the guidance of mediation theory, the interview content with overseas students in China is further analyzed. The research claimed that among the six sub-strategies of learning strategies, the frequency of using them from high to low was as follows: affective strategy > social strategy > meta-cognitive strategy>cognitive strategy > compensation strategy > memory strategy. There were no significant differences in the use of learning strategies by gender and learning duration, but there were differences in the use of specific strategies, and factors affecting the use of Chinese learning strategies include important others, self-intermediation, cultural quality, learning context, rule intermediation, community intermediation and role intermediation. The author concluded that great individual learner discrepancies exist in CSL learning strategy use under the influence of sociocultural mediation. Chen suggested further studies to analyze the long-term impact of such mediation on CSL learning outcomes, which provides implications for subsequent related research. The results of this study provide a positive reference for international Chinese language teachers to improve their teaching strategies and improve their

teaching efficiency, and contribute to the improvement of Chinese language learning effects of international students in China.

A Comparative Analysis of Empirical Studies

Having elaborated on the core elements of the two empirical studies respectively, this paper will now shift its focus to a comparative analysis of the two works. The comparison will center on how they operationalize mediation theory in distinct L2 learning contexts, the differences and similarities in their research designs, core findings regarding mediation strategies, and the practical implications derived, so as to reveal the contextual adaptability and universal laws of mediation strategies in L2 learning from a sociocultural perspective.

Commonalities in Mediation Strategies Between the Two Studies

Both studies adhere to the foundational proposition of sociocultural theory: mediation serves as the critical link transforming external social experiences into internal L2 competence. For Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017), this is manifested in teachers' and peer experts' mediation that guides young Hebrew-L1 learners toward Arabic acquisition. Teachers avoid direct translation to push children to actively engage with L2, while L2-proficient Arab peers, who are labeled "language experts", mediate interactions by clarifying misunderstandings between Hebrew-L1 and Arabic-L1 children. These social-mediated activities gradually enable children to internalize Arabic knowledge, for instance, Hebrew-L1 children who initially rely on peers to interpret Arabic instructions eventually use basic Arabic phrases independently.

Similarly, Chen (2021) emphasizes that multi-dimensional mediation facilitates the internalization of Chinese learning strategies among international students. "Significant others" create social interaction contexts; "cultural quality" offer tools for knowledge scaffolding; and "self-mediation" bridges external support and individual mastery. Together, these mediated experiences help students transform discrete learning strategies into automatic L2 communication skills, such as using WeChat to practice Chinese daily with native speakers, a behavior rooted in social mediation and tool mediation.

A second key commonality is that both studies prioritize "ZPD-aligned mediation", which means designing and adjusting mediation strategies to match learners' current L2 proficiency, a core tenet of Vygotsky's theory. Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) document how teachers in the Arabic-Hebrew preschool dynamically calibrate mediation based on children's ZPD. For example, at the start of the academic year, when Hebrew-L1 children have minimal Arabic exposure, teachers use concrete scaffolding, e.g., pointing to a "big bottle" while repeating the Arabic term qanineh kbeereh to anchor understanding. As children progress, teachers reduce scaffolding—instead of gesturing, they ask children to identify cognates to activate prior knowledge, ensuring mediation stays within the zone of potential development.

Chen (2021) similarly finds that international students' use of mediation strategies is tightly tied to their L2 (Chinese) ZPD, shaped by learning duration. Learners within 6 months of Chinese study rely on basic mediation tools aligned with their limited proficiency. They use memory strategies mediated by textbooks and compensation strategies mediated by mother tongues, e.g., using Russian or English to clarify Chinese meanings. In contrast, learners with over 12 months of study adopt more complex mediation. They use meta-cognitive strategies mediated by self-reflection such as planning daily oral practice, and social strategies mediated by Chinese communities that provide topic-based conversations. This differentiation confirms that effective mediation depends on matching strategies to learners' current developmental level.

Thirdly, Both studies move beyond the traditional "teacher-centric" view of mediation, recognizing it as a multi-agent system involving diverse mediators, which includes teachers, peers, tools, and even learners themselves. Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) identify two primary mediator groups in the preschool: teacher mediators, who take on dual roles as L2 models and strategy designers; and peer mediators, who mediate peer interactions by translating contextually and modeling L2 use. Notably, the study highlights that peer mediation complements teacher efforts--experts bridge linguistic gaps that teachers may miss, especially during unstructured activities like free play.

Chen (2021) expands the mediator scope further, categorizing mediators into seven interconnected types under the mediation theory framework: "Significant others", "self-intermediation", "cultural quality", "learning contexts", "rule intermediation", "community intermediation", and "role intermediation". This multi-agent system reflects that L2 mediation is not a unidirectional process but a synergistic interplay of social, material, and individual factors, consistent with Schwartz & Gorbatt's (2017) emphasis on mediation as a collective rather than individual act.

Differences in Mediation Strategies Between the Two Studies

While both studies anchor mediation strategies in sociocultural theory, they diverge in core goals of mediation, roles of mediators, types and implementation of strategies, adaptation to learner characteristics, and responses to linguistic context challenges—all rooted in their distinct L2 learning scenarios.

The fundamental goal of mediation strategies in Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) centers on addressing language status inequality and promoting the minority language. In Israel's sociolinguistic context, Hebrew dominates daily life, media, and institutions, while Arabic faces marginalization. Hebrew-L1 children have limited exposure to Arabic and low motivation to use it. Thus, teachers' mediation strategies are intentionally designed to counteract this imbalance: for example, avoiding direct translation of Arabic to Hebrew, explicitly requesting Hebrew-L1 children to respond in Arabic during circle time, and using peer "language experts" to model Arabic use. The overarching aim is to construct a "protected space" for Arabic in the classroom, ensuring it is not overshadowed by Hebrew.

In contrast, Chen (2021), focusing on international students learning Chinese, a majority language in China, frames mediation strategies as tools to facilitate L2 skill mastery and adapt to the target language environment. Unlike Arabic in Israel, Chinese is the dominant language in the learning context. Thus, mediation strategies are not aimed at "protecting" the L2 but at supporting learners to leverage available resources. The core goal here is to help learners efficiently acquire Chinese skills by aligning mediation with their practical learning needs.

Secondly, from the perspective of roles of mediators, Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) limits mediators to two primary, interaction-focused groups: teachers and peer "language experts," with teachers as the dominant drivers. Teachers take on dual roles: on the one hand, "L2 models", and on the other hand, "strategy designers". Peer experts, while valuable, act as auxiliary mediators. They clarify misunderstandings but do not independently design strategies. Mediators here are "active interactors" who engage in real-time, face-to-face scaffolding.

Chen (2021) expands the mediator system to seven interconnected, multi-functional types, moving far beyond a teacher-peer system, which include "significant others", "self-intermediation", "cultural quality", "learning contexts", "rule intermediation", "community intermediation" and "role intermediation". Critically, many mediators here are "passive tools" or "contextual factors" that learners actively utilize: mediation is not limited to face-to-face interaction but includes self-directed use of resources.

Thirdly, from the perspective of the implementation of mediation strategies, Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) emphasizes immediate, interactive mediation strategies tailored to young children's cognitive needs. These strategies are implemented in real-time during teacher-child or peer interactions: avoidance of direct translation, explicit L2 requests, teacher modeling of L2 learning, and peer expert guidance. Strategies are concrete, sensory-focused and require continuous adult/peer guidance.

Chen (2021) focuses on learner-initiated, resource-based mediation strategies suited to adult learners' autonomy. These strategies are often pre-planned or self-adjusted, not dependent on real-time interaction, which include "cultural quality use", "self-mediation", "community participation" and "rule-driven strategy selection". Strategies are abstract, goal-oriented and leverage learners' ability to independently access and use resources.

Regarding the adaptation to learner characteristics, Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017) designs mediation strategies to align with 5-6-year-old children's concrete operational thinking and limited self-regulation. Young learners rely on external guidance and sensory cues to process L2. Mediation also prioritizes emotional comfort. When children feel frustrated, teachers use gentle prompts instead of pressure, recognizing young children's vulnerability to L2

anxiety.

Chen (2021) adapts mediation strategies to adult learners' formal operational thinking and strong self-regulation. Adult students can set learning goals, select appropriate tools, and reflect on strategy effectiveness: for example, learners with over 12 months of Chinese study use meta-cognitive mediation to optimize learning, while beginners use compensation mediation to overcome gaps. Strategies also respect adults' autonomy, for students choosing mediation tools based on their preferences rather than relying on teacher directives.

Last but not least, regarding learner's responses to linguistic context, Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017)'s mediation strategies are explicitly designed to combat the marginalization of the minority language. In Israel, Hebrew permeates children's daily lives, making Arabic easy to ignore. Thus, strategies intentionally restrict majority language use: teachers refuse direct translation to Hebrew, enforce Arabic-only tasks during circle time, and frame Arabic use as a "shared rule". The goal is to create an "Arabic-rich micro-environment" that offsets the broader societal dominance of Hebrew.

Chen (2021)'s mediation strategies leverage the target language environment rather than countering marginalization. In China, Chinese is the language of daily life, campus communication, and media—students have abundant opportunities for natural L2 input. Thus, strategies encourage learners to integrate with the environment: "social mediation", "contextual mediation", and "cultural mediation". Unlike Schwartz & Gorbatt (2017), there is no need to "protect" the L2. Instead, mediation helps learners capitalize on the surrounding Chinese context to practice strategies.

Conclusion

Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this comparative analysis of two empirical studies, one on Arabic-Hebrew bilingual preschool in Israel (Schwartz & Gorbatt, 2017) and the other on Chinese L2 learning for international students in China (Chen, 2021), has distilled three highly viable mediation strategies for L2 learners. These strategies are in consonance with the theory's central tenet that L2 development is a product of socially mediated interactions.

The first strategy is engaging in multi-agent interactive mediation. Learners are advised to actively utilize "significant others". Teachers can offer targeted feedback on grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage, while native speakers can offer authentic language input and cultural insights. By interacting with these "significant others", learners can transform external social support into internalized L2 competence. The second strategy is adopting ZPD-aligned context mediation. Learners should match mediation tools to their current proficiency levels. Beginners may rely on more basic and concrete tools such as picture flashcards, simple textbooks with large fonts and many illustrations, and language learning apps that focus on basic vocabulary and phrases. As learners progress, they can use more advanced tools in the target language, and language exchange platforms for in-depth discussions. Moreover, they should capitalize on contextual resources. The last strategy is practicing self-intermediation for regulation. Learners can use private speech to rehearse L2 sentences, which bridges the gap between external support and individual mastery.

This research has a few shortcomings. Its findings are limited in scope because they rely on particular contexts and tiny, unrepresentative samples. Furthermore, the studies did not delve into how mediation methods might affect L2 abilities in the long run. Moving forward, it's crucial for subsequent research to branch out to various L2 environments and adopt longitudinal approaches to monitor strategy efficacy over an extended period, thereby bolstering ecological validity. Incorporating mixed-methods analysis could also shed light on the underlying cognitive processes of mediation, fine-tuning how sociocultural theories are applied to L2 acquisition. Exploring digital mediators, particularly AI-powered language tools, would plug the holes in our understanding of how technology shapes L2 progress, ensuring that the theory keeps pace with current educational settings.

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