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Research Paper

## Feuerstein's Theory and Pedagogy: Epitomizing Mediated Learning Experience in Teaching Grammar

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### Abstract

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory suggests that the quantity and quality of learning interactions guided by a mediator significantly impact a learner's cognitive and psychological development, as well as their ability to become autonomous and independent learners. This research aimed to apply MLE theory in pedagogy by designing a grammar lesson plan based on MLE principles, specifically focusing on the present continuous tense. By operationalizing and activating MLE parameters within a grammar class, this study sought to explore the potential benefits of implementing MLE in educational settings. The integration of MLE in pedagogy not only transforms the role of teachers into facilitators of lifelong learning and mentors for fellow educators but also enables learners to develop problem-solving heuristics and cultivate essential skills for autonomous learning and critical thinking in the contemporary knowledge-based era.

**Keywords:** Mediated Learning Experience; MLE-based grammar lesson plan; MLE parameters activation

**نظریه و آموزش فوئرشترین: تجسم تجربه یادگیری با واسطه در آموزش گرامر**  
تئوری تجربه یادگیری میانجی‌محور بر این باور است که توسعه شناختی و روانشناختی فرد و همچنین عملکردش به‌عنوان فردی مستقل، تحت‌تاثیر میزان و چگونگی تعاملات میانجی‌گرانه‌ای می‌باشد که آن فرد تجربه می‌کند. این مطالعه سعی دارد روش تجربه یادگیری میانجی‌محور را با اجرای اصول دوازده‌گانه‌اش، در طرح درسی که برای تدریس زمان حال استمراری در یک کلاس گرامر طراحی شده است، عملیاتی کند. عملیاتی‌کردن روش تجربه یادگیری میانجی‌محور در تدریس باعث ایفای نقش معلم در تحقق یادگیری پایای دانش‌آموز و رهبری دیگر معلمان، همچنین سبب توسعه فرایندهای کوشی حل مساله و تفکر و یادگیری مستقل، که نیاز عصر دانش‌محور اخیر است، در دانش‌آموز می‌شود.

**کلمات کلیدی:** تجربه یادگیری با واسطه. طرح درس گرامر مبتنی بر MLE؛ فعال سازی پارامترهای MLE

## Introduction

Although the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory developed by Reuven Feuerstein (Feuerstein, 1990; Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1991; Feuerstein et al., 1985) initially focused on enhancing the cognitive abilities of children with special needs, such as those with autistic spectrum disorders, fragile X syndrome, Down syndrome, and other syndromes, as well as working with traumatized and orphaned youth after the Holocaust (Feuerstein et al., 1980), it has since been extended to various contexts. Over the past 70 years, MLE has been applied to diverse situations, including parent-infant interactions, caregiver-child interactions, adult-child interactions, and even teacher-student interactions within the classroom environment.

Feuerstein's research centered on understanding the internal cognitive changes, the prerequisites for thinking, and strategies to facilitate individuals in acquiring the skills of self-directed learning. In essence, he asserted that learners possess cognitive plasticity, which allows for the modification and enhancement of their cognitive functioning, regardless of factors such as age, intellectual impairments, genetic or neurophysiological backgrounds, or developmental stage. Feuerstein emphasized the concept of "modifiability" and "autoplasticity" (Feuerstein et al., 1988, p. 62) as opposed to predictability and immutability, highlighting the potential for individuals to develop and transform their cognitive abilities.

The belief in the potential modification of an individual's cognitive functioning and the role of mediated learning experiences in facilitating this development has given rise to the Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) theory (Poehner, 2008). At its core, SCM emphasizes the significance of mediated learning interactions in shaping cognitive abilities. In other words, the degree to which an individual can be modified is directly linked to the quantity and quality of mediation provided by a mediator. As stated by Feuerstein et al. (1985, p. 50), "a fundamental assumption of SCM is that an individual's cognitive functioning is intricately tied to the extent of mediated learning experiences (MLE) they have received." Thus, MLE serves as the central construct within SCM (Skuy, 1997), with mediation serving as its foundational element.

## Mediated Learning Experience Theory

The Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory proposes a distinct form of interaction known as mediated learning, which occurs between a mediatee (learner) and a mediator (such as a teacher, caregiver, or knowledgeable adult) within the learning environment. Feuerstein et al. (1981) identified mediated and direct learning as two fundamental conditions for learning to take place. In mediated learning, the mediator intentionally selects, filters, explains, or interprets the stimuli presented to the learner (Seng et al., 2003). This is exemplified by the Mediator-Learner Model, where a caring individual acts as a "go-between" (Skuy, 1997, p. 120), interposing themselves between the learner and the stimuli, as well as the learner and their responses (Feuerstein, 2000). In contrast, direct, non-mediated learning involves Teacher-Learner interactions that occur through observational learning in an unstructured and incidental manner, as well as stimulus-response conditioning. In this case, the teacher provides a relevant stimulus and interacts with the learner based on their response to that stimulus.

Feuerstein has emphasized that not all teacher-learner interactions can be classified as Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) interactions. He proposed twelve attributes, referred to as "parameters of MLE," to define an MLE interaction (Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1991, as cited in Skuy, 1997, p. 122). The first three parameters, namely intentionality and reciprocity, meaning, and transcendence, are considered universal and essential in any mediated interaction, while the remaining parameters are situational in nature (Feuerstein et al., 2015). The situational criteria are context-specific and influenced by cultural factors and the specific learning task (Isman &



Tzuriel, 2008, p. 547). The following are the twelve MLE principles and their definitions, adapted from Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991):

1. **Intentionality and reciprocity**: emphasis on, and orientation of the learner towards a goal (focus), and eliciting responsiveness
2. **Meaning**: communication of the significance, value, and purpose of an activity
3. **Transcendence**: expansion of the need system and generalization of ideas/principles/strategies, beyond the immediate situation
4. **Competence**: promotion of self-esteem and a sense of competence
5. **Self-regulation and control of behavior**: enhancement of conscious self-control and self-discipline
6. **Goal setting and planning**: explicit involvement of the learner and structuring of processes related to setting and planning achievement of goals
7. **Sharing behavior**: promotion of cooperative, supportive, and interdependent behavior, and empathy
8. **Individuation**: encouragement of autonomy and a sense of uniqueness
9. **Challenge**: development of enthusiasm for, and a determination to master complexity and novelty, and encouragement of risk-taking
10. **Search for an optimistic alternative**: overcoming negative attitudes to, and promoting positive-constructive approaches to solving problems
11. **The feeling of belonging**: countering individual insulation and enhancing links with a broader reference group
12. **Self-change**: promotion of a consciousness of change and progress in oneself

### Discussion

The researcher, who also serves as the teacher, aims to demonstrate the manifestation of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) principles in the teaching of grammar. This is achieved through an MLE-based grammar lesson focused on the present continuous tense. The specific grammar lesson chosen is Unit 5, "Present Continuous (1)," from the book "Basic Oxford Practice Grammar" by Coe, Harrison, and Paterson (2020). The lesson is located on pages 10 and 11 of the book and is taught in the classroom setting.

To illustrate the implementation of MLE in the classroom, a specific scenario is presented in the form of a table (Table 1). This table outlines an MLE-based lesson plan for teaching the present continuous tense, highlighting how the researcher operationalizes MLE principles, activates MLE criteria as a mediator, and adopts the mediator-learner model instead of the traditional teacher-learner model.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of how the teacher incorporates Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) parameters in her grammar class, specifically focusing on the teaching of the present continuous tense. In order to create this MLE-based lesson plan, the researchers had previously developed an MLE-based Taxonomy (Hadidi Zavareh et al., 2023). To facilitate the discussion, the lesson has been divided into four distinct stages. The subsequent paragraphs offer a summary of these four stages.

In Stage 1, the mediator employs intentional strategies to capture the student's attention by clearly stating the learning objectives of the grammar lesson. This fosters an atmosphere of intentionality, where the teacher's purpose and direction are explicitly communicated. Additionally, the mediator stimulates the students' curiosity and engagement by displaying relevant pictures and posters on the board, promoting reciprocal interaction between the teacher and students. This intentional approach also contributes to goal-setting behavior, as the teacher deliberately designs the learning environment to create a sense of purpose and direction. Furthermore, the teacher acknowledges and praises the students' enthusiasm and eagerness to

learn, fostering a sense of competence. In essence, Stage 1 serves as a warm-up phase, establishing a positive and goal-oriented atmosphere for the lesson.

In Stage 2, the teacher emphasizes the significance of the grammar lesson, specifically addressing the use of the present continuous tense to describe actions and situations in progress at the present moment (Use1). The teacher also provides a rationale for focusing on this particular aspect, presenting stimuli that highlight the importance, value, and relevance of the topic (Meaning). Additionally, the mediator regulates the learners' efforts in task completion by either inhibiting impulsive responses or encouraging timely and appropriate reactions (Reflective practice). The teacher supports the learners' attempts to complete tasks or answer questions through collective engagement, such as responding in chorus (Feeling of competence). Moreover, the teacher demonstrates patience in pursuing the learning goals, employing goal-directed teaching behaviors to plan and achieve the desired outcomes (Goal-planning and goal-achieving behavior).

Additionally, the teacher facilitates pair work and collaborative activities for the students to jointly complete the assigned tasks (Interdependency and sharing). This fosters a sense of cooperation and mutual support among the learners. Furthermore, the teacher provides a range of assignments and tasks related to the same grammar lesson, exposing the students to different applications of the grammar concept and guiding them towards encountering novelty and complexity (Novelty and complexity). In Stage 2, the teacher specifically focuses on teaching and elaborating on the use of present continuous for actions and situations in progress at the present moment (Use 1). This is achieved through exercises A and B, as outlined in Appendix 1, which are designed to engage the students in practicing and applying the grammar concept.

In Stage 3, the mediator delves deeper into the significance of the grammar lesson, specifically focusing on Use-2: actions and situations around the present moment, but not precisely at the current time. The teacher emphasizes the importance of this aspect by providing personal relevance and meaningful contexts to enhance understanding (Meaning). Additionally, the teacher intervenes directly to guide the students' responses to grammar tasks, ensuring that their answers align with the intended direction (Reflective practice). Furthermore, the teacher consistently acknowledges and praises the students' responses and efforts, fostering a sense of competence and motivation (Feeling of competence). Moreover, the mediator designs appropriate grammar tasks and activities that are aligned with the objectives of the lesson, while also employing goal-directed teaching behaviors to plan and achieve the desired outcomes (Goal-planning and goal-achieving behavior).

**Table 1**

*Classroom Scenario of MLE*

<b>Mediator-Learner Interactions</b>	<b>MLE Principles Activated: Mediation of:</b>
<p><i>Stage 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher brings with her a picture of a man sleeping (similar to the first picture in exercise A on page 10 of the book) and a picture of the postcard in exercise B on page 11 of the book (Appendix 1). She sticks them on the board with a magnet.</li> <li>• The mediator announces to the class:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Intentionality</b></li> <li>- <b>Goal-seeking and goal-setting behavior</b></li> </ul>

- 
- “We are going to learn about two different uses of Present Continuous today”.
- The pictures are large enough to arise students' curiosity and excitement. There is a sense of attention and expectation among them as the teacher sticks the pictures on the board. - **Intentionality**
  - The teacher affirms their curiosity and willingness to learn. - **Reciprocity**
- Stage 2* (Use 1- actions and situations in progress now)
- The mediator puts away the picture of the postcard and focuses on the picture of a sleeping man and says to the class: *This is George.* - **Feeling of competence**
  - She points at her watch or a clock and says: *George eats a sandwich at this time every day.* Then she points to the picture of George sleeping and says: *What about today? Is it true today?* [No.] *What is he doing now? At the moment, ...* - **Meaning (in progress now)**
  - The facilitator waits to see if the students can finish the sentences in either of these two ways: ... *George is sleeping.* ... *George isn't eating a sandwich.* - **Reflective practice**
  - The researcher affirms their efforts for completing the sentence. If the class needs help, the teacher says the sentences herself and writes them on the board. - **Reflective practice**
  - The teacher elaborates on the use of Present Continuous to talk about actions and situations in progress now or exactly at the moment we speak (Use 1). - **Feeling of competence**
  - The mediator puts the students in pairs to complete exercise A on page 10 of the book (Appendix 1). They should discuss the pictures before writing their sentences. - **Goal-planning and goal-achieving behavior**
  - The researcher puts away the picture of the sleeping man and sticks the postcard on the board. She explains this is another
-



example of using the Present Continuous to talk about actions and situations in progress now or exactly at the moment we speak (Use 1).

- The teacher gives the students five to ten minutes to complete exercise B. She Allows them to compare their answers with a partner before checking the answers with the whole class.

- ***Interdependency and sharing***

- ***Novelty and complexity***

*Sage 3*(Use 2 - actions and situations around now, but not exactly now)

- ***Interdependency and sharing***

- The facilitator refers the class back to exercise A by asking: *What's George doing?* [He's sleeping.]

- ***Meaning (around now)***

- Then she says to the class: *I'm sleeping at my parents' house this week. Am I sleeping at my parents' house at this moment? Do I always sleep at my parents' house?* [No.] *What about last night?* [Yes.] *And tonight?* [Yes.]

- ***Reflective practice***

- ***Reflective practice***

- The teacher expresses regular affirmation as students respond.

- ***Feeling of competence***

- The teacher elaborates on the use of Present Continuous to talk about actions and situations in progress around now but not exactly at the moment we speak (Use 2).

- ***Goal-planning and goal-achieving behavior***

- The researcher puts the students in pairs to complete exercise C on page 11 (Appendix 1).

- ***Interdependency and sharing***

- The mediator shows the class the Student A and Student B worksheets (Appendix 2). She explains this is another example of using the Present Continuous to talk about actions and situations around now, but not exactly now (Use 2). She tells them that each of the two worksheets has a different email on it.

- ***Novelty and complexity***

- ***Interdependency and sharing***

- ***Reflective practice***

- ***Interdependency and sharing***

- The teacher divides the class into pairs and gives one student in each pair a Student A worksheet, and the other a Student B worksheet. Then she gives the class five to ten minutes to

- ***Goal-planning and goal-achieving***

complete the emails.

*behavior*

- The researcher maneuvers to provide help to students in analyzing the task components and arousing awareness of task characteristics and suitable responses. - *Transcendence*
- The facilitator puts the students in AB pairs to test each other. Each student has the correct answers for their partner on their worksheet. - *Goal-planning and goal-achieving behavior*
- The researcher reminds the students that they have looked at 2 pieces of writing containing different uses of the Present Continuous - a postcard and an email - *Feeling of competence*

*Stage 4 (Writing an email)*

- The teacher directs the students to exercise 2 on the worksheet. The students are now supposed to do a short piece of writing themselves using the present continuous with the help of the provided prompts. - *Interdependency and sharing*
- The mediator points out that they will need both uses of Present Continuous in their writing.
- The teacher goes around the class and gives support and guidance and affirmation.
- The researcher gets the students to read each other's work when they have finished.

Furthermore, the teacher actively promotes pair work and encourages peer assessment in the classroom. To facilitate this, the students are paired up in AB pairs, enabling them to test and assess each other's understanding (Interdependency and sharing). Additionally, the teacher introduces the grammar lesson with creativity and complexity by assigning various tasks and activities. For instance, the mediator presents students with novel and challenging situations that require them to apply the present continuous tense (Novelty and complexity). In Stage 3, the teacher focuses on teaching Use 2 of the present continuous tense, which involves actions and situations around the present moment but not precisely at the current time. The teacher provides detailed explanations and guidance on this aspect, while also guiding the learners towards encountering novel and complex situations. This is achieved through Exercise C (Appendix 1), as well as Exercise 1 of both Student A and Student B worksheets, which involve completing an email to a friend (Appendix 2).

In Stage 4, the teacher aims to personalize the grammar tasks by engaging the students in writing an email, utilizing the provided prompts as guidance. This activity not only helps them

develop problem-solving heuristics but also encourages them to apply their learning to situations beyond the immediate context (Transcendence). Furthermore, the teacher actively moves around the classroom, providing assistance, encouragement, and guidance to the students, fostering a sense of competence and support (Feeling of competence). Additionally, the teacher facilitates pair work, allowing the students to read and provide feedback on each other's writings, promoting interdependency and sharing of knowledge (Interdependency and sharing). In summary, in Stage 4, the researcher extends the grammar tasks beyond the immediate lesson by having the students engage in Exercise 2 of both Student A and Student B worksheets, involving writing an email to a friend (Appendix 2).

Intentionality, meaningfulness, and transferability emerge as essential components of this grammar lesson. Furthermore, the incorporation of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) repertoire nurtures students' confidence, fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange among peers and guides learners toward encountering novel and complex concepts. Ultimately, the integration of MLE principles facilitates students' development of metacognitive skills and cultivates their capacity to become independent and self-reliant learners. This approach empowers students to effectively access a wealth of knowledge, while also promoting high-quality interactions within the learning environment.

### Conclusion

The theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) highlights the crucial role of mediation in fostering cognitive development within social interactions and pedagogy (Tan, 2003). While initially employed as a model of learning in psychology and targeted towards disadvantaged children and adolescents, MLE has found application in diverse contexts, including contemporary classroom instruction and interventions spanning various educational domains. MLE is rooted in the framework of the Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) theory, which posits the malleability and adaptability of cognitive processes.

MLE empowers educators to embrace new roles that align with educational reforms, positioning them as mediators of knowledge sources and facilitators rather than mere content disseminators. Furthermore, MLE yields desirable outcomes for students, including heightened motivation, increased flexibility, and enhanced adaptability.

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## Appendix 1

A. Look at the pictures and the words in brackets ( ). Decide what is happening ( ) and what isn't happening ( ). Then write positive or negative sentences.



(George/eat/breakfast)

(George/sleep)

1.(They/work)

(They/sit/in the garden)

2. (I/study/music)

(I/learn/Japanese)

3. (He/play/tennis)

(He/win)

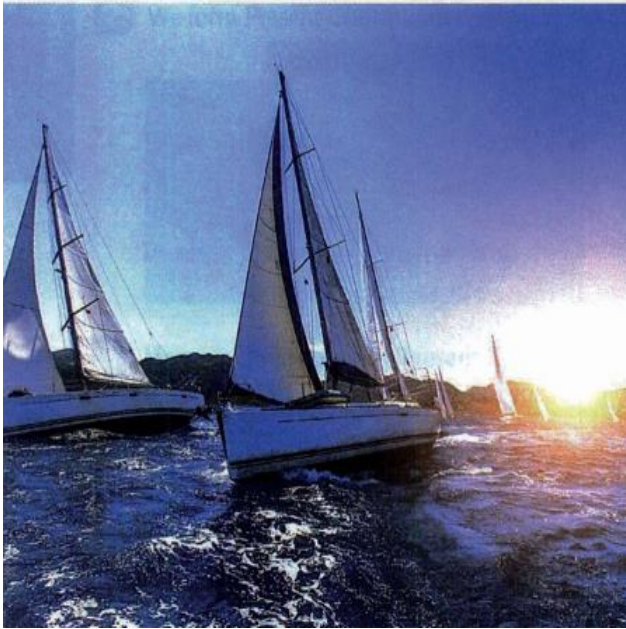
4. (We/spend/a day at the seaside)

(The sun/shine)

*George isn't eating breakfast.*

*George is sleeping.*

B. Complete the postcard using the words in brackets ( ) in the Present Continuous. Use full forms (e.g. *is sitting*).



Dear Peter,

Jenny and I *are staying* (stay) here for a week. The sun ..... (shine) and it's very hot. We ..... (sit) on the beach and I ..... (drink) an orange juice. We ..... (not swim) because we're both tired. We ..... (watch) the boats on the sea at the moment. They ..... travel fast, but I can see 15 to 16. Jenny ..... (read) her book, and I ..... (write) all the postcards!

James and Jenny

C. Match the two halves of the sentences. Then put in the correct form of the verb in brackets ( ).

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| • My aunt <i>is staying</i> (stay) with us this week.<br>drowsy. | a. so he is feeling quite    |
| 1. .... (go) to work by bike this week<br>at home.               | b. because she ..... (work)  |
| 2. My father ..... (take) some medicine<br>home today.           | c. so she ..... (stay) at    |
| 3. Anna is not in the office this week<br>living room.           | d. so I am sleeping in the   |
| 4. Olivia needs some exercise<br>broken.                         | e. because our oven is       |
| 5. We ..... (eat) in a restaurant this week.<br>good mark.       | f. because he wants to get a |
| 6. Charlotte doesn't feel well<br>money for petrol.              | g. because I haven't got     |

## Appendix 2

### Worksheet

An email to a friend

Student A

Complete Peter's email by putting in the correct form of the verb in brackets ( ).

Hi James

Thanks for your postcard. I think I need a holiday too – everything's a bit crazy here at the moment!

I'm sleeping in the living room because my aunt (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) with us this week. Tom's worried about his exam. He (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (study) more now because he wants to get a good mark. And my father's not very happy. He (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (take) some medicine so he is feeling quite drowsy.

One good thing – we (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) in a restaurant this week, because our oven is broken!

See you soon, Peter

Student B's answers

1 am sleeping    2 is working    3 is staying    4 am going

- Write a short email to a friend. Use the Present Continuous to tell your friend about:
  - the weather today
  - how you are feeling
  - what you are doing at the moment
  - something that you are (or someone you know is) doing differently today or this week, and why.

## Worksheet

An email to a friend

### Student B

- Complete Zoe's email by putting in the correct form of the verb in brackets ( ).
- Write a short email to a friend. Use the Present Continuous to tell your friend about:
  - the weather today
  - how you are feeling
  - what you are doing at the moment
  - something that you are (or someone you know is) doing differently today or this week, and why.

Hi Jenny

Thanks for your postcard. I think I need a holiday too – everything's a bit crazy here at the moment!

My aunt is staying with us this week. She's got my bedroom, so I (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (sleep) in the living room. Anna's not in the office this week because she (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) at home. Charlotte doesn't feel well, so she (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) at home today. And I (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to work by bike this week, because I haven't got money for petrol. I'm feeling really tired!

See you

soon, Zoe

Student A's answers

1 is staying 2 is studying 3 is taking 4 are eating

### Biodata

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