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Mediation in the multicultural language classroom: An investigation into the perceptions of Greek adolescent students

1. Introduction

The concept of mediation is central to the Social Interactionist school of psychology reflected in the works of both Vygotsky (1962, 1978), and Feuerstein (1980, 1991). However, while for Vygotsky mediation refers to the use of “symbolic tools” among which language is the most important for Feuerstein mediation refers to the intervention of “a significant other” in the learning process. In his theory the way in which the significant adult interacts with the child plays a central role in his/her cognitive development. Where Feuerstein has not been so clear is what the child’s part is in the interactive mediated process. He is even less clear on how learners as mediators perceive this experience at different developmental periods such as childhood and adolescence.

Research on mediation in classroom contexts so far has focused only on the teacher as mediator (Chin, 1990; Deligianni, 1999; Warren, 1995; Williams and Burden, 1997); little research has been carried on the learner, particularly in multicultural contexts.

The present small-scale study focuses on the learner and mainly on the adolescent learner in the Greek multicultural educational context taking into consideration the particularities it bears for both teachers and students.

Extended research on adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Kimmel et al., 1995; Marcia, 1993; Urdan & Pajares, 2001) confirms that the most important aspect in this transitional phase marked by biological, intellectual, and psychological changes is identity formation, a multifaceted process that reaches at a crucial point in late adolescence.

Being mainly informed by the interpretive research paradigm the study is concerned with understanding how adolescent students perceive the features of mediation in their school context. Moreover, it aims to investigate any school and gender differences in students’ perceptions in two distinct Greek Senior High Schools and how mediation is implemented by teachers in the adolescent classroom. Finally, it attempts to make students’ voices heard through the issues they raise and to problematize the way mediation theory is transplanted in the EFL context so far. It argues that in the critical period of adolescence mediation process should be different and focus more on the students’ identity development.

My specific research questions were:

1. How do Greek adolescent students perceive the features of mediation in their school context?
 - a. What are the similarities and differences in the adolescent students’ perceptions according to type of school?
 - b. What are the similarities and differences in the adolescent students’ perceptions according to gender?
2. According to adolescent students’ perceptions which specific features of mediation

are *actually implemented* by their teachers?

3. What *other features* adolescent students perceive to be important for mediation in their school context?

2. Literature review

2.1 Mediation in educational psychology: the sociocultural approach

Mediation theory originates mainly in Social Interactionism, a school in educational psychology which combines the constructivist (Bruner, 1960, 1966; Kelly, 1955; Piaget, 1966, 1972) and humanistic thoughts Erikson (1963, 1968; Maslow, 1968, 1970; Rogers, 1969, 1982). The main premise of Social Interactionism reflected in the works of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Feuerstein (1979, 1980, 1991) is that learning occurs in a social context through interaction with other people.

In particular, Vygotsky's views on thought and language (Vygotsky, 1962) that have been elaborated into the sociocultural theory by recent researchers (Lantolf & Pavlenko 1995; Donato & McCormick, 1994) in the area of language learning. Psychological activity from the very beginning of development includes a sociocultural character. Children, do not discover on their own logical rules; children who master their own psychological processes do so, through tools given by a culture (Kozulin, 1994) Adults, and more competent peers, *the significant others* in Feuerstein's terms introduce symbolic tools to the child and teach him/her how to use it. Still, the role of *the significant other* is not fully elaborated within the Vygotskian framework. This theoretical gap is filled with Feuerstein's theory of learning which assigns a major role to a human mediator.

2.2 Feuerstein's theory of learning

In contrast to Vygotsky's mainly theoretical work Feuerstein's theory arose from practical needs. He worked in Israel with groups of severely impaired children in their ability to learn due to traumatic war experiences and with immigrant children from culturally different countries. Refusing to accept that these children are mentally retarded and incapable of learning Feuerstein approached the phenomenon as an outcome of deprived teaching of the appropriate learning skills and strategies. He developed for this purpose his theory of learning which is epitomized into four components: the Structural Cognitive Modifiability, the Mediated Learning Experience, the Instrumental Enrichment and the Dynamic Assessment (Feuerstein, 1980, 1991).

Structural Cognitive Modifiability epitomizes Feuerstein's overall philosophy that a person's cognitive structures are indefinitely modifiable. This radical view of lifelong cognitive development contrasts with the traditional view of intelligence as a 'fixed', mysterious and time-limited quality (Galton, 1869; Jensen, 1972) a position that impedes the true potential of every human being. Over many years of clinical work Feuerstein came to believe that children's intelligence appears to have enormous plasticity and flexibility and it can be modified by the appropriate intervention of significant adults. Structural Cognitive Modifiability is the theoretical framework on which, Mediated Learning Experience, Instrumental Enrichment and the Learning Potential Assessment Device are based.

Instrumental Enrichment is a cognitive intervention program that can be applied both individually and in classroom settings. It is content - free in nature and is built on Feuerstein's notion of a cognitive map which is a representation of the key factors involved in performing any mental act. Its main purpose is to enhance the learning potentials and cognitive functioning of the students teaching them to learn how to learn (Williams and Burden, 1997).

The Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) refers to a set of instruments in which assessment is a dynamic rather than a static process with goals and procedures different from those of static assessment of the IQ tests. Assessment in Feuerstein's paradigm is permeated by the principles of Structural Cognitive Modifiability and is interlinked with the learning process and not separated by it. Its aim is to develop the students' metacognitive strategies at the same time as they are being assessed.

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)

In the Social Interactionist School, the Vygotskian 'paradigm' of learning is based on the notion that a child as a member of a particular sociocultural group appropriates learning tools characteristic of that group. Education in its broader sense is a process by which the child accepts instruction within his /her Zone of Proximal Development. This is an "area" within which the child's functions are in a state of cognitive development. The emphasis is placed on the constructive activity of the child who uses 'psychological tools', those symbolic mediators (signs, symbols, formulae, texts, graphic organizers) to learn (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In contrast, the Feuerstein 'paradigm' of learning places emphasis on the notion of Mediated Learning Experience and the role of the educator as a mediating adult in the learning process.

Human mediators are important figures in the child's learning. The way these *significant others* intervene shapes the child's experiences and cognitive development which in turn construct his/her own view of the world. Feuerstein's approach to learning is child-centered similar to the ones developed by Piaget and Vygotsky but in his model the human mediator is assigned a pivotal role. He actually modified Piaget's model of Stimuli – Organism- Response (S-O-R) (Piaget 1966,1972) to his own model of Stimuli- Human Mediator- Organism- Human Mediator- Response (S-H-O-H-R). The Human Mediator influences both the input and the output of the learning experience and his/her culture, intention and relationship with the mediate affect both the selection of stimuli and the output of learning (Feuerstein & Kaniel, 1989: 168).

It is worth noting that Feuerstein's ideas have been criticized for the emphasis he gave to the powerful adult, and for the fact that he did not pay so much attention to the learner's contribution to mediation (Williams & Burden, 1997: 97), although he advocated that the ultimate goal in his 'paradigm' of learning is to contribute to the cognitive development of the learners in such a way that they become independent and self-regulated (Feuerstein, 1991).

Following Feuerstein Mediated Learning Experience is a special quality of interaction between a learner, a task and a mediator and it is permeated by twelve features which he calls parameters. Of these twelve, the first three **critical parameters** - intentionality and reciprocity, meaning and transcendence are universal and necessary conditions for an interaction to qualify as mediation. They are considered responsible for what human beings have in common: structural modifiability. The other nine parameters are task dependant and context dependant.

Intentionality and reciprocity

In MLE the specific content of the interaction is shaped by *the intention to mediate to the mediatee*, not only the particular stimuli, activity or relationship, but also to share this intention. In the classroom context it is important the teacher to present in a coherent way the tasks conveying clear instructions to the learners so that the learners realize what is expected of them. At a deeper level, this modality of interaction creates in the student awareness of the learning process and of the didactic principles underlying it. This orientation, once internalized, becomes the steering power towards more efficient learning, and in turn, leads to higher levels of modifiability (Feuerstein et al., 1991).

Meaning

Mediation of meaning addresses the *energetic dimension of interaction*; it answers the questions of why, what for, and other questions related to the casual and teleological reasons for something to happen or to be done. In educational contexts it comprises a vital role of the teacher to convey the significance of the task and the learning experience in a way that has personal relevance and meaning to the student. At a deeper level it endows the student with the “need” to look for the “meaning” in a wider sense of the term, in all aspects of life (Feuerstein et al, 1991).

Transcendence

The meaning of transcendence is *going beyond the goals of interaction* which is considered among the most important characteristics of mediation (Feuerstein et al., 1991). In classroom contexts the mediation of transcendence makes students aware of the more general learning value of a task widening the primary goals of interaction t by including more remote, and often more important than the primary ones.

Feeling of competence

Research in educational psychology suggests that the most successful learners are those who feel competent (Feuerstein et al., 1991, Hamachek, 1988; Maslow, 1968, Rogers, 1969; Smith et al., 2005). However, the feeling has to be reflected in the views of others and in the interpretation given by them to one’s behavior. If children develop a negative image of themselves they will easily become low achievers (Williams and Burden, 1997). Here, the teacher’s role as mediator is crucial to mediate to the child the feeling of competence and a positive self-image.

Control of behavior

‘Control of behavior’ is based on cognitive and metacognitive components. It has to do with taking control of one’s learning and it is associated with the notion of learner training to which it provides a strong theoretical underpinning. The notion of learner training (Ellis and Singlair, 1989; Dickinson, 1987; Ellis, 1991) refers to *teaching learners how to learn* so that they are equipped with life-long skills and strategies which will make them self-regulating and autonomous learners. The following three

features of mediation foster this notion of control of learning behavior: goal setting, challenge and awareness of change.

Goal setting. Mediating to the student the search for and choice of a goal enriches and articulates his/her life as a learner (Feuerstein et al., 1991). In addition it adds an organizing principle and mobilizes the necessary tools for the materialization of the chosen goal. Teachers as mediators need to encourage and help learners to set their own realistic and even short-term goals which is particularly important for adolescents being in a process of ‘becoming’ (Urduan and Pajares, 2001).

Challenge. The importance of challenge in life as an internal drive and motivation is commonly recognized. Following Feuerstein (1991) the mediation of challenging behavior should be considered the goal of education in general and enrichment in particular for all programs aiming to prepare the individual for adapting to the novelty and complexity of our world. Mediation of challenge facilitates the completion of identity formation, the most important phase in adolescent development (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1993).

Awareness of change. The belief in modifiability may become a potent determinant of change in the individual. Teachers as mediators need to foster the belief in change and the willingness to monitor and assess the changes in oneself. Self assessment and monitoring are metacognitive strategies which involve learners in reflecting on the learning process (Brewster et al., 1992) The absence of belief in change makes “the educational system anemic, manifesting at best a passive accepting approach” (Feuerstein et al., 1991).

Positive thinking

Cognitive therapists believe that individuals can switch focus, redescribe and change their outlook to a more positive dimension (Barnes, 1999). At its simplest, learning to dispute negative beliefs, and redescribe adverse events more positively, has the effect of changing how we feel. Positive perceptions are commonly associated with hope, tenacity and academic success. Negative perceptions are associated with passivity, low motivation and giving up easily. (Seligman, 1990). This aspect of mediation is a precursor to the mediation of the feeling of competence in the sense that unless having the firm belief that *something is possible* makes the involved person become committed to the search for ways to turn the possible into a materialized experience.

The three last features of mediation are concerned with **fostering social development.**

Sharing behavior

Sharing behavior reflects the need of the individual to go out of his own self in the direction of participating with others and make others participate with him/her. It is culturally bound, even though according to Maslow (1968) and Feuerstein (1991) it exists as an individual need at a very early stage of development since childhood.

Individuation

Individuation represents the need of the person to become an articulate, differentiated self as opposed to the “other” with whom he/she yet shares him/herself. The process of individuation is enhanced by the feeling of belonging and acceptance which is generated by the mediation of sharing. The teacher- mediator’s role is to recognize that learners are unique individuals who have their own contribution to make and have

the right to develop at their own paces. This is particularly important at the developmental phase of adolescence (Hamachek, 1992).

Feeling of belonging

The feeling of belonging has comprised a primitive need of the human beings since life appeared and still is, although in modern technological societies the individual's right to privacy is highly stressed. More traditional societies give it a higher priority (Feuerstein et al, 1991). In adolescence the need of belonging is exhibited into the influential role that peer relationships and peer groups play into adolescents' lives. Being *accepted* by the general peer group and having friendships has been related to adolescents' emotional and academic development (Urda and Pajares , 2001).

2.3 Previous studies of mediation. A critical review

In my view, the research done into the mediation area that occurs in language teaching focused mainly on the teacher's perceptions and practices and not on the learner.

Warren (1995) evaluated teachers' performance as mediators in language classes. In her words:

“one of the most important findings of the investigation was that successful teaching of the tasks did not depend simply on their design. It also depended on the Mediated Learning Experience, that is, on the way the teacher mediated in the classroom” (Warren, 1995: 182).

Williams and Burden (1997) investigated teachers' perceptions of the various features of mediation and also actual classroom practices. Chin (1990) carried a pilot research with 50 primary teachers in Taiwan and her findings highlight that the features of mediation are perceived differently within different cultural contexts.

Shehatah (1998), in a small-scale research study in Saudi Arabia, found that teachers do believe in the importance of many aspects of mediation even if they do not always use them in the EFL classroom. She suggested that Teacher Education programs could take this into consideration (Shehatah, 998: 157). A similar study carried by Deligianni (1999) in Northern Greece showed that there is a discrepancy between what the majority of the teachers think of the features of mediation and their actual classroom practices .

Focusing on the learner Brainin (1995) examined several cognitive curricula and in particular how Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein et al., 1991) can be used with low functioning pre-adolescents and adolescents in remedial educational settings. Her findings proved that Feuerstein's statement of what failed to occur adequately in the natural settings can still occur in the planned learning context. Instrumental Enrichment and all the programs surveyed gave special importance to the teacher's role as mediator of the student's learning. Brainin brought the question of the quality of pedagogy to the forefront: “in intervening to engage students' awareness of their own thinking and learning, the teacher has indeed, no place to hide” (Brainin, 1985: 127).

Gray and Feldman's (2004) study gave another perspective to the notion of mediation assigning the human mediator's role to the adolescent student. Their research of 196 naturally occurring interaction sequences between adolescents and much younger students in a radical alternative school, the Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts proved that free age mixing can offer the opportunity for adolescents to

act as mediators. However, they argue it is doubtful if the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development could be applied in conventional school settings where there is student segregation according to age and thus, both parties are deprived of a valuable resource for development and education. In addition, a major obstacle in conventional schools are the group structure, the mandatory curriculum, which, along with the group structure, greatly restricts students' abilities to initiate topics and thereby reduces students' motivation (Gray and Feldman, 2004: 112). The researchers concluded that in certain respects, and under some conditions, adolescents may be even more effective as mediators to young children than teachers or other *significant others*.

3. Methodology

Although the data collection techniques come from both positivist and interpretive approaches, this small-scale study was carried out mainly informed by the interpretive paradigm since it is "primarily concerned with human understanding, interpretation, intersubjectivity and lived truth" (Radnor, 1994). The study had three aims: to understand how adolescents perceive mediation (Chin, 1990; Deligianni, 1999; Feuerstein, 1991; Warren, 1995; Williams and Burden, 1997) within two Greek Senior High Schools; to trace any school and gender differences in the students' perceptions of mediation and to investigate how mediation is implemented by teachers- mediators in the adolescent context. Grouping particular I wanted to "give a voice" to the students in an educational context that seems to neglect it and also bring into surface *other* features of mediation students perceived as important.

The research lasted from November 2006 until January 2007 and covered two different Senior Comprehensive High Schools in the area of Rodopi, Thrace, North Greece. School A (SA) is a small village Multicultural Comprehensive and School B (SB) a large city Comprehensive (Appendices 1 and 2). The two schools are distinct in terms of population, cultural origin and socio-economic stratum of the students attending each school.

Participants and procedures

Sixty five adolescent students were asked to participate in the study: 25 from School A and 40 from School B. 33 participants were female and 32 were male. They were in Year 2 (ages 16-17) and Year 3 (ages 17-18) at the time of the study. All participants filled in an anonymous questionnaire to ensure confidentiality. The two semi-structured interviews were conducted with different groups from each school, each group consisting of three girls, aged 16 to 17 years old. This was caused by the unwillingness of male students to participate during their Christmas holidays. The interviews took place in different days in comfortable surroundings outside school so that adolescents would not feel pressurized. Both sets of interviews lasted for 30-35 minutes each. The Greek language was preferred in order to facilitate participants express their views without any inhibition. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

Methods

The data collection techniques were separate survey questionnaires and group semi-constructed interviews. The Student Mediation Questionnaire used is adapted from Williams and Burden (1997: 87) Teacher Mediation Questionnaire which was also used in earlier studies (Chin, 1990; Deligianni, 1999; Shehatah, 1998; Warren, 1995). A second part was added to the Questionnaire with the form of an open question in order to elicit qualitative data (Appendix 3). In order to further understand recurrent issues which seemed to contradict the overall picture emerged from the analysis of quantitative data of the questionnaire, two group interviews based on the questionnaire data (Appendix 4) were conducted with one group of students from each school.

Limitations and ethical considerations

This is a small-scale study and as such it does not claim generalisability. It rather aims to shed light to the adolescent students' perceptions of mediation and to the parallel issues that emerged from the analysis of the results in the Greek educational context.

As far as the questionnaire is concerned, time was a serious constraint to pilot and distribute it to a larger sample. In addition, after analyzing the data a bigger sample would appear be necessary to reach some generalizations referring to the differences in students' perceptions according to school (small vs. big, rural vs. inner city school) and gender. Moreover, the data collection techniques could be richer. Classroom observations for a term could offer valuable data on teachers' implementation of the features of mediation and students' responses to them. With regard to the interviews more group interviews with participants of both gender would offer to my investigation the male participants' views, thus making it more complete than the present one.

I had also to take into consideration previous researchers' practical and epistemological concerns as to how participants respond to us based on who we are in their lives as well as the social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender, class and race. The issue could be more complicated when there is social distance and we do not share membership with our study groups (Miller and Glassner, 1997). Interviewees may ignore or they may purposely mislead us in their responses. Being a Head Teacher at the time of the study and a power-figure often negatively associated by adolescents could function as a limitation or a challenge for them. I tried to overcome the social distance issue and any possible misleading interview outcomes by establishing familiarity and trust with all the interviewees, being clear as to the purposes of my research, by assuring confidentiality and not being judgmental to their responses.

The issue of validity was a further issue when using group interviews. Cohen et al. (2005) identify 'bias' as the main cause of invalidity. Being at the same time a member of the context I was researching I tried to prevent my own biases and beliefs to affect the students' attitude and to seek answers that support my preconceived notions.

4. Results and discussion

The results of the study are presented in three parts. First, the data related to adolescent students' perceptions of mediation according to school and gender. Then, students' perceptions of the implementation of mediation by teachers and last, what other features of mediation students perceive as important in their context.

4.1. Students' perceptions of mediation by School

This section presents and discusses the results related to my first research question how adolescent students perceive mediation according to school.

4.1.1. Critical parameters of mediation

There appeared to be a differentiation by school of the critical parameters of mediation among the students' perceptions (Table 1). In School A the majority of the students value the critical parameters as very important with the highest rate for intentionality and reciprocity (88%). In School B it is equally valued high but with a considerable lower rate. Mediation of meaning and transcendence are perceived quite differently in the two schools. In School B the majority of the participants perceive them as quite important or neutral. As student A postulates on the mediation of meaning:

"I believe it is of not such importance and can become a little boring if Ts tells every time what is the significance of every task we do. Some things are obvious"

Table 1: Comparison of Critical Parameters by School

(n=65)

	<i>Very important</i>		<i>Quite important</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Not v. important</i>		<i>Not important</i>	
	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB
Intentionality and Reciprocity	88%	65%	12%	30%	0	0	0	5%	0	0
Mediation of Meaning	52%	22.5%	28%	32.5%	12%	22.5%	12%	17.5%	0	5%
Transcendence	60%	22.5%	20%	32.5%	16%	30%	4%	10%	0	5%

4.1.2. Parameters reinforcing mediation

In School A (Table 2), the majority of students value more the parameters of mediation fostering the notion of taking control of one's learning (Williams and Burden, 1997) with the highest rates for control of behavior, goal setting and positive thinking (68%) and the lowest rates for challenge and awareness of change (40%).

An interesting point is that 'challenge' had the lowest rates in both schools. Student A of School B explains :

“...it [challenge] has to do with students’ goals. In the 3rd Comprehensive [SB] students have already set their personal goalsand they focus on these goals”

There is also a differentiation in students’ perceptions with regard to the parameters of mediation relating to social development. In School B they are valued more than in School A with the highest rate for belonging (57.5%).

To quote student A of School B :

“...I believe it is very important because if you don’t have this feeling of belonging you cannot function properly, you cannot make any real progress if you lack this feeling of classroom community”

and Student B from the same school expresses on sharing behavior:

“it is very important teachers to encourage sharing behavior in the classroom and not only for learning purposes.”

A possible explanation for these differentiated perceptions may be the population as well as the social, cultural and economic stratum of each school (Appendix 2). Students of School A coming mainly from working-class and agricultural families seem to be more school and teacher-dependent. A typical comment is a plea for a more learner-centered teaching in the state school: *“teachers should understand that not all the students are able to attend private language schools”*. This contrasts with the comment of one of their peers in School B: *“.. a lot of things in the English class are considered “easy” for the students because they go to a “frontistirio”*. These students come mainly from middle and upper- class families who can resort to private tuition.

Table 2 : Comparison of Parameters Reinforcing MLE by School
(n=65)

	<i>Very important</i>		<i>Quite important</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Not v. important</i>		<i>Not important</i>	
	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB	SA	SB
Feeling of competence	48%	35%	24%	27.5%	20%	12.5%	4%	20%	4%	5%
Control of behavior	68%	62.5%	12%	25%	20%	7.5%	0	5%	0	0
Goal setting	68%	45%	12%	27.5%	20%	20%	0	7.5%	0	0
Challenge	40%	27.5%	28%	40%	20%	12.5%	8%	17.5%	0	5%
Awareness of change	40%	42.5%	36%	32.5%	12%	12.5%	8%	10%	8%	0
Positive thinking	68%	62.5%	12%	25%	20%	7.5%	0	0	0	5%
Sharing behavior	44%	50%	36%	27.5%	16%	12.5%	4%	10%	0	0
Individuation	28%	50%	28%	35%	24%	5%	20%	5%	0	5%
Belonging	52%	57.5%	28%	22.5%	8%	10%	8%	10%	0	2.5%

In addition, the implementation of the National Curriculum appears to have different impact on the students’ well being and need for social development. In School B, a big, prestigious but highly competitive city school participants feel more *“pressurized by the system”* and alienated as being in *“a factory machine”*. The adolescents’ needs for belonging, expressing their uniqueness as identities and sharing with others are considered more important compared to their peers in School A, who share closer relationships in their school community and social context. It appears that the results confirm Feuerstein’s view (1991) that more traditional societies give

sharing behavior, individuation and belonging a higher priority, although in modern technological societies the individual's right to privacy is highly stressed.

4.2 Students' perceptions of mediation by gender

This section presents and discusses how female and male adolescent students perceive the parameters of mediation.

4.2.1. The critical parameters of mediation

Overall, there is not much differentiation in students' perceptions of the critical parameters of mediation according to gender (Table 3). Both male and female students value more the mediation of intentionality and reciprocity. They perceive it as very important with rates of 75.7% and 71.8% accordingly for each gender. However, the rates are very low for the other two critical parameters and in particular for the mediation of meaning. It is worth noticing that transcendence is the only parameter where the rating of male students is higher than their female peers. Female student B confirms this view of transcendence:

"...Perhaps because we are not so interested in analyzing the reasons why we learn what we learn".

Table 3: Comparison of Critical Parameters by Gender

(n=65)

	Very important		Quite important		Neutral		Not v. important		Not important	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Intentionality and Reciprocity	75.7%	71.8%	21.2%	25%	0	0	3%	3.1%	0	0
Mediation of Meaning	36.3%	28.1%	33.3%	28.1%	9%	28.1%	21.2%	9.3%	3%	3.1%
Transcendence	36.3%	37.5%	21.2%	34.3%	30.3%	18.7%	9%	6.2%	3%	3.1%

4.2.2. Parameters reinforcing mediation

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of the parameters reinforcing mediation by gender. Female students seem to prioritize the parameters of mediation related to taking control one's learning. The majority perceive them as very important with the highest rates for control of behavior and positive thinking (69.6%) and the lowest rate for challenge. On the contrary, male students appear to value more the parameters of mediation fostering social development with the highest rate for 'belonging' (62.5%).

Female student B emphasizes:

"...Being a Lyceum student is so demanding and can be at times so frustrating that if you do not develop a positive thinking you cannot manage."

And another female student C remarks on the male students' perceptions of the feeling of competence:

“...Perhaps boys feel it is embarrassing ...that they are becoming vulnerable if they accept help (female student B, SA)

Table 4: Comparison of Parameters Reinforcing MLE by Gender

(n=65)

Interestingly, male students valued the parameters related to social development more than female students. I interpreted these indications as reuting from maturation process during adolescence.

In the words of female student B:

*“ I think **boys are not so much interested in school**...at least at this age they are interested more in other things...in having fun for instance or in having affairs”*

This may be an indication that females experience maturation process at a deeper level than their male peers. Indeed, there is evidence in research that girls tend to mature more rapidly than boys in their identity achievement (Kimmel and Wieder, 1995) and that concerns about beliefs, occupational goals and about interpersonal relatedness play different roles in the identity formation of male and female adolescents (Christopherson et al.,1988)

4.2. Implementation of mediation in the adolescent classroom

This section discusses the results related to my second and the third research questions, what are the adolescent students’ perceptions of their teachers’ implementation of mediation and what other features of mediation are important in their school context.

4.3.1. Perceptions of teachers’ implementation of mediation

The analysis of the data revealed a *different* classroom reality. According to the participants’ perceptions not all the features of mediation are implemented by their teachers.

In both schools the critical parameters of mediation are implemented with the exception of intentionality and reciprocity. Student A of School A observes : :

*“ ... I also believe it is very important and perhaps students characterize it so because it is often **absent**”*

Students’ perceptions concerning the parameters reinforcing mediation are rather negative. They feel disappointed by the frequency and the quality of their teachers’ implementation. Indicatively student A of School A notes on competence:

*“Usually it[feeling of competence]**does not happen** because there are many students in the classroom.. Some times it happens usually in the beginning of the school year”*

Implementation of the other parameters of mediation in the classroom appears be either “*an urge of the moment*” or, it is totally absent.

Student A of School B confirms the above views commenting on control of behavior:

“ ... Well, some times teachers give us instructions to look in the sources but this is not happening with a guided and a responsible way for the

students...they just leave us alone...without making us realize the value of learning how to learn”

and student B of School A emphasizes on positive thinking:

*“...it is very important, but at least in my class this is not happening...for instance weaker students do not persist in their efforts when they find some difficulties, which means that **nobody taught them** how important it is in life to keep on trying and not give up”.*

Similar feelings permeate students concerning the parameters fostering social development. Student C of School A points out on sharing behavior:

*“It [sharing behavior] means that students learn to be more receptive, tolerant and open minded as characters. But this principle of cooperation is **not encouraged** in the present school system, at least not at Lykeio”*

The lack of proper teacher training in the adolescent context may be considered one cause for the insufficient implementation of mediation. It is an implication that Teacher Education programs should seriously take into consideration. Another may be the structure of the exam - oriented curriculum which subjects students to severe levels of anxiety and transforms classrooms to “*factory machines*”. Students undermine any other school subject that does not serve the exam purposes. “*We feel so much pressurised by the system*” is a repeated and a prevailing emotion among adolescents while schooling should be a source of positive experiences and a process of inner development.

The perceived implementation of mediation is closely related to the constructed images students have of their teachers as mediators. Teachers are portrayed incomplete as professionals, emotionally detached, very often biased and as if being embodied to an impersonal educational system. The above view is best summed up by student B:

“Teachers do not care so much on everyone’s individuality, most of them are indifferent to the problems we face as adolescents”

Students seem to challenge and be sceptical of their teachers’ role as mediators. An issue to problematise here is as to what extent these perceived images reflect objective realities and teaching practices or they are constructed through the *lens* of adolescence, a period characterised by active uncertainty and contradictions, a state of *identity diffusion* according to Erikson (1968). Indeed, there is evidence on research that during adolescence students often report a level of mistrust in teachers and a lack in meaningful communication with them assigning a major role in peer relationships. (Wentzel and Battle, 2001). Interestingly, results also implicate that adolescents expect from their teachers to act as *a significant other* but not with the sense Feuerstein (1991) introduced as a person who intervenes in the learning process selecting, changing, amplifying and interpreting both the stimuli that come to the learner and the learner’s responses. Adolescents’ perceptions of their teachers as mediators are closely related with issues of identity formation process, which I will discuss in the following section.

4.3.2. Other features of mediation students perceive as important

The analysis of the qualitative data highlighted some additional features of mediation adolescents perceive as equally important. These perceptions are expressed around central issues students raise as follows:

a) Mediation in the adolescent classroom should focus more on the students' identity development

Aspects of identity development as *individual differences*, *social awareness* and *critical thinking* appear to be of prior concern for adolescent students and should not be ignored in the mediation process. Student A of School B draws attention to the absence of any care for personal growth in the current teaching practice:

"I think that "different" than the norm students, or the gifted ones are squeezed in the Greek Comprehensive Lykeio"

and student B stresses the need to foster social awareness:

"Teachers should try to make students think and speak more on social issues in the classroom".

b) The role of the teacher as mediator is pivotal in the adolescent classroom and should also focus on students' identity development

Although adolescents have been very critical to their teachers' attitudes expressing often disappointment they expect the teacher - mediator to have qualities of a *pedagogue*. To quote student A:

"I believe it is important the teacher to educate the kid so that he could become a better person and also to inspire him some social values".

c) The implementation of mediation in the adolescent classroom should be pervaded by the values of Humanistic approaches of learning.

Students claim for a more student-centered teaching which emphasizes on the teacher-student rapport *"the relationship between student and teacher I think as the most important"* but also involves the whole person *"students need creativity"* and minimizes criticism *"there shouldn't be belovod ones in the classroom"*.

Research highlights identity formation as the most important phase in adolescent development (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). Identity refers to the organization of the individual's drives, abilities, beliefs, and history into a consistent image of self. It involves deliberate choices and decisions, particularly about work, values, ideology, and commitments to people and ideas (Marcia 1980, Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). According to Erikson (1968) if adolescents fail to integrate all these aspects and choices, or if they feel unable to choose at all, role confusion threatens. An issue to proplematise here is whether Feuerstein's mediation theory and the way it is "transplanted" into the TESOL area (Chin, 1990; Deligianni, 1999; Warren, 1999; Williams and Burden, 1997) is valid in late adolescence with all developmental phases that characterize this transitional period.

Also, central to the developmental psychology of both Vygotsky (1968) and Feuerstein (1991) is the idea that the secret of effective learning lies in the nature of the social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skills and knowledge (Williams and Burden 1997). However, adolescent students' perceptions reveal that this nature of interaction between teacher - mediator and adolescents-mediatees seems *"mutilated"* or fragmentary and incomplete

In addition, although I do not deny the validity of Feuerstein's main philosophy in structural cognitive modifiability (Feuerstein et al. 1991) and its implementation through mediated learning this was sprung and developed out of particular needs, in a particular era and with particular age groups (children). Results of my research and my teaching experience with adolescents so far make me adopt the view that with this particular age group a different form of mediation is needed.

Last, the implementation of mediation in the Greek adolescent context should not ignore students' voices against the social inequalities the curriculum creates in the classrooms. The current curriculum favors the flourishing of a system of "parapaedia"¹ thus establishing a highly competitive climate instead of a classroom ethos with serious psychological impact on adolescents' well-being.

Student B words express a prevailed feeling among participants:

"...the system itself imposes that you have to **carry on alone** and you have to **count only on your self** if you want to succeed...".

5. Conclusion

An important omission from previous research on mediation theory in the EFL classroom (Chin 1990, Deligianni 1999, Warren 1995, Williams and Burden 1997) is that it does not focus on the role the learner as mediator plays in the interactive process. In this study, adolescent students' perceptions of mediation appear to be affected by the existing differences related to the area a school is situated, the population and the socio-economic and cultural stratum of each school as it happened with School A and School B of my research. In School A the critical parameters of mediation are valued highly while in School B students seem to prioritize the importance of the parameters fostering social development. Although male participants seemed to value more the features of mediation fostering social development compared to their female peers, in the main gender did not appear to influence so much adolescent's perceptions of mediation in their context and of their teachers as mediators.

However, the data reveal a rather disappointing situation as to the implementation of mediation by EFL teachers in the classroom. According to the students' perceptions the implementation of mediation appears to be either limited as with the case of the critical parameters and superficial as with the parameters concerning taking control of one's learning or totally absent as with the parameters fostering social development. In addition, adolescents raise important pedagogic issues and though they are critical towards their teachers' role as mediators they acknowledge the importance of teachers in their lives as *significant others*. They argue for a *different* quality of mediation in their context closer to issues concerning identity development and they claim for a *different* teacher-mediator rapport, more sensitized to the critical phases they go through.

The over-riding impression of this study is that the theory of mediation is not perceived so influential by adolescents at least under the present conditions of the teaching of English in the Greek Senior High School. It would appear that mediation theory seems to neglect adolescents' worries and concerns and the psychological phases they go through. In the adolescent English language classroom that often looks an arid place, where creativity, critical thinking and social awareness are absent or implemented in fragments mediation theory needs to re-establish itself and focus more on principles and parameters that foster the development of adolescents' identity and their "fragile" process towards maturity.

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¹ Parapaedia, refers to bad quality private education in parallel with state education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

1.1. *The Greek Comprehensive Senior High school. A critical review*

The Greek Comprehensive Senior High school [Eniaio Lykeio] belongs to the category of upper secondary non-compulsory education. The duration of studies in an Eniaio Lykeio is three (3) years, unless it operates as an Esperino (Evening school), in which case it is four (4) years.

Within the recent educational reform named 'Education 2000' the role and structure of this type of school have changed. In theory, it comprises an autonomous educational stage in its own right and not only a preparatory stage for Tertiary education as it was previously considered to be. The general objectives of the Comprehensive Senior High are:

- to offer general education of a high level to all the students
- it develop the students' aptitudes, creative and critical thinking
- to equip the students with the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue their studies at tertiary level.
- to cultivate students' skills which will after specialization of training, facilitate their access to the labour market

Studies at the Comprehensive Senior Highschool are structured into three grades and students' ages attending the school range from 15 to 18 years old. The 1st grade operates as an orientation year with a general knowledge curriculum which is common to all students. The 2nd grade includes three "directions" of studies: Theoretical, Science and Technology. In the 3rd grade the curriculum includes the same "directions" but Technological direction operates in two courses: i) the Technology and Production course and ii) the Information Science and Services course (the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs Website. Retrieved January 24, 2007, from http://www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1531.htm).

The concept of evaluation epitomizes the overall philosophy of the recent educational reform but in practice it is implemented only through students' subjection to tests and national exams at the end of each academic year. This exam oriented curriculum fosters a highly competitive school environment and urges the majority of the students to attend private schools named 'frontistiria'² which have the purpose to help students cope with the demands of the school subjects. The dramatic increase of the number of 'frontistiria' over the last years depicts the social and psychological problem this system has created. Private tuition costs a lot of money to the students' families and subjects adolescents to work overload and feelings of burn-out.

Moreover, the implementation of the current school curriculum in the adolescent context seems to ignore the contemporary trends and practices in pedagogy such as humanistic, social interactionist and sociocultural approaches to learning,

² An etymological analysis of the word frontistirion > φροντιστήριον=care for, attend to

learner autonomy and the potential of education as a means of empowerment. Also, it underestimates student's cultural diversity and individual differences.

Furthermore, the curriculum seems to ignore the 'voices from the classroom'. That is, the feeling which a significant number of teachers have developed through their teaching experience that the pedagogic objectives of cooperative learning and cultural understanding in the classroom have been lost or put aside. Instead, there is a strong tendency towards competitive classrooms, in which students attempt to prove to themselves, to their classmates, and to the teacher too that they are the best-prepared, the first, or the fastest ones.

1.2. The place of English in the Senior High school curriculum

The teaching of English as a foreign language in the state secondary education of Greece dates back to the early 60s along with French which had already been introduced much earlier. At present, English is a compulsory subject at all three levels of the State Education: primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

According to the Senior High school curriculum English is taught for three hours per week in the 1st grade, and two hours per week in the 2nd and 3rd grades. The choice of the course books, grammar books and supplementary readers for each grade is made by the teachers themselves according to the students' level, aptitudes and interests Teachers select from a given bibliography that has been approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Students do not sit National Exams for English and this has a serious impact on the status of the subject in the curriculum and the importance adolescents perceive it has for their academic achievement.

APPENDIX 2

Description of the schools participated in the study

2.1. Description of School A

School A refers to the *Comprehensive Senior Highschool of Xylagani* in the Prefecture of Rodopi, Thrace, Northern Greece. The school can be described as a typical multicultural school and a case of an educational establishment which dramatically changed under the impact of the educational reform in 2000. Small schools in the Greek rural areas fell gradually *into decline* in terms of population and popularity among the students. Indicatively, the population of the school in the academic 1998-1999 was 170 students and in 2005-2006 the total number of the students was only 31. The school is highly technologically equipped but this is not enough to prevent the students' flow towards more popular city schools.

Students come from the agricultural area of South Rodopi which covers five villages with the nearest of them at a short distance from the city of Komotini and the rest of them being more isolated. A common characteristic of the area is the multicultural and multi ethnic origin of the population. Indigenous Christian - Orthodox and Muslim families live together with immigrant families originated from the Balkan peninsula or the countries of the Baltic (ie Russia, Ukraine, Armenia). This comprises the multicultural and multilingual stratum of the school which follows the same curriculum as city schools. In the year this research was

conducted 9 students attended the 1st grade, 7 students attended the 2nd grade and 15 students attended the 3rd Grade. Twelve secondary teachers of all high school subjects were employed in school.

2.1. Description of School B

School B of the study refers to the 3rd *Comprehensive Senior HighSchool of Komotini*. The school comprises a typical city middle and upper class multicultural city school. The school consisted of 350 students at the time of the research, segregated into three grades according to age with each grade subdivided into 4 classes of 25-30 students. The school is highly technologically equipped and is considered one of the most prestigious in the area due to the high success rate students have at the University Entrance exams each year. The majority of the students come from middle and upper class families of the Christian Orthodox and the Muslim communities of the city. Very few students come from working class families and especially immigrant families from the Balkan peninsula or the countries of the Baltic (ie Russia, Ukraine, Armenia). Thirty five secondary school teachers covering every school subject of the curriculum were employed to teach in school.

APPENDIX 3

Students Mediation Questionnaire

Part A

You will read below 12 things that your Teachers could do when teaching the English language. Think and decide *how important you believe* they are. Please tick the box that is *closer* to your beliefs.

Personal information

Age:

Sex:

School:

5	Teach you the strategies you need to learn very effectively	Very important	Quite important	Neutral	Not very important	Not at all important
1	Give you a task to do your own goals					
6	Teach you why you are learning					
2	Help you do set challenges for activity					
7	Explain to you how to develop strategies to meet these challenges					
3	Help you to evaluate your own progress in your ability to learn					
8						

9	Help you to see that if trying there is always a solution to a problem					
10	Teach you to work and co-operate with other students					
11	Help you to develop as an individual					
12	Make you feel that you belong to the classroom community					

Part B

Please mention any other thing(s) you believe they are important:

Thank you for your co-operation and contribution.

APPENDIX 4

Questions for the Students Group Interviews

Question 1- on intentionality and reciprocity

According to the questionnaire results most of the students believe it is Very Important that the Teachers give clear instructions when they assign you a task . What do you believe on this? Would you like to comment?

Question 2 - on mediation of meaning

Concerning the mediation of meaning there are differences in students' perceptions. In Xylagani Students think it is Very Important to be told about the value of a

particular activity whereas Students in Komotini perceive it as Quite Important or Neutral. What is your opinion on this? Can you explain?

Question 3- on mediation of transcendence

Students of two schools perceive the mediation of transcendence differently. Students in Xylagani believe it is Very Important while the Students in Komotini perceive this as Quite Important or Neutral. Why do you think this is happening? Can you elaborate on this?

Question 4- on the feeling of competence

- What do you believe on the idea that your Teachers promote and reinforce the feeling of competence through tasks and activities? Do your Teachers do so? How do you feel about it?

-And what is happening with the students that are not high achievers and they feel they have low confidence? How do the teachers treat them?

Question 5- on control of behaviour

A central point in the theory of mediation is the skill to learn how to learn. All students in both schools have the view that it is Very Important. Is this happening at your school and how? What do you think?

Question 6 - on goal setting

Now about the mediation of goal seeking, goal setting and goal achieving behavior. The majority of the students in both schools have the view that this feature is Very Important or Quite Important. Do your teachers foster this in their teaching practice?

Question 7- on challenge

Students' answers concerning the mediation of challenge, show that there are different perceptions in the two schools. The majority of the students in Xylagani believe that it is Very Important or Quite Important whereas in the Lyceum of Komotini the majority of the Ss believe it is Quite Important or Not Very Important. What is your opinion on this? How do your teachers promote challenge in the classroom?

Question 8 - on awareness of change

As far as the mediation of the awareness of change is concerned the majority of the students in both schools believe that it is Very Important or Quite Important that the teacher helps you evaluate your own progress. What are your views on this?

-How do you think this could happen? Do your Teachers foster the notion of change and evaluation in the classroom? Do you take part in your evaluation?

Question 9 - on positive thinking

Do you believe it is important that your Teacher develops in Students a positive thinking fostering as a philosophy of life together with a search for an optimistic alternative without giving up? How does your teacher do this?

Question 10 - on sharing behavior

In both schools Ss believe that mediation of sharing behavior is Very Important. Is this happening at your school? Do your Teachers promote co-operation in learning?

Question 11 - on individuality

All students agreed that mediation of individuality is Very Important. I would like your own views on this. How do you perceive individuality at your age? Do your teachers respect students' individuality?

-What about culturally different Students? Our area is multicultural. How do Teachers deal with it in the classroom?

Question 12 - on belonging

Students perceive differently the mediation of belonging in the two schools. What are your views on this? Do you think it is important that your Ts nurture a sense of belonging to the classroom community? Do your teachers do this?

Question 13 - on students' perceptions of the parameters fostering social development according to gender

Questionnaire results show that male students think the parameters of mediation fostering social development are more important than those related to the control of one's learning. Would you like to comment on this?

Last general question:

Would you like to add anything else you believe it is important?

APPENDIX 5Students Group Interviews- A sample transcription

Interview with students from School B [3rd Comprehensive Senior Highschool of Komotini], conducted on 28th December 2005

Question 1

INT. *According to the questionnaire results most of the students believe it is VI that the Ts give clear instructions when they give you a task to do. What do you believe on this? Would you like to comment?*

S1.....That it is very important because if the T gives wrong instructions the S would be misguided with the effect to do the task in a wrong way.

S2Yes, I also believe it is very important and perhaps students characterized so because it is often absent ... There is so much pressure on them to cover the expected material from the syllabus and to meet the dead lines so that many times Ts do not explain clearly and Ss have to guess... It is very important Ts to give clear instructions from the beginning so that Ss have adequate time to understand and raise further questions if they have any.

INT. *So, you believe that there is kind of a “gap” to fill in here from the part of the Ts.*

S2. Yes, I believe there is a gap, and if Ts realize it would save teaching time to all of us, because there shouldn't be a need to extra clarification in the following lesson to tasks and issues that have been introduced in a previous lesson.

Question 2

INT. *Concerning the mediation of meaning there are differences in students perceptions.. In Xylagani Ss think it is VI whereas Ss in Komotini perceive it as QI or Neutral. What is your opinion on this? Can you explain?*

S2...I believe it is of not such importance and can become a little boring if Ts tells every time what is the significance of every task we do.

S1. I agree. Some things are obvious.

INT. *Why do you think there is this difference in Ss perceptions in the Lyceum of Xylagani? Could you give any explanation?*

S2. I do not know if Ss in the Lyceum of Xylagani go to a “frontistirio”. In my school a lot of things in the English class are considered “easy” for the Ss because they to a “frontistirio” and they are more conscious on the use and the structure of the English language. Maybe this is the reason.

S1. Sure, students here know already most of the things from the “frontistirio”. So, there is no need for the T to emphasize on the meaning of every task.

Question 3

INT. *Carrying on with the 3rd question which is related to the mediation of transcendence, there is also a differentiation in the Ss answers according to school. Ss in Xylagani believe it VI contrasted with the Ss in Komotini who perceive is as QI or Neutral. What is your view on this? Why do you think this is happening?*

S1. It is the same as the above answers.

INT. *Could you elaborate on this?*

S2. Perhaps, because we are not so interested our selves in analyzing the reasons why we learn what we learn. We feel so much pressurized by the system and we lack of time to sit down and think how each task or subject is going to help us in the future. Perhaps this is the reason.

INT. *...that is you realize sort of a passive attitude from the students, is that you mean or is it something else?*

S2. Yes, this is exactly what I mean. We are not interested in finding why each subject is going to help us in the future, we lack time to do so on our own or with our teachers.; we are here just to cover the materials, we are not have time to think and to be criticalthis is how education works in Lykeio and I don't see why it could be a different case with English as a subject.

Question 4

INT. *What do you believe on the idea that your Ts promote and reinforce the feeling of competence through tasks and activities? Do your Ts do so? How do you feel about it?*

S1. Most of the times our Ts reward us with a good grade or with a “well done” that they say but in general they are not so helpful in this issue. For instance when the student is not so good and does not feel so much self confidence because of low grades, teachers do not help him in this.

INT. *And what is happening with the students that are not so high achievers? That they feel they have low confidence? How do the teachers treat them?*

S2. Now in the Lyceum I attend, there are students with different levels but the students themselves are not so much interested in the subject of English, because they do not sit national exams for it so the students that feel weak they just do not participate in the lesson and Teachers do not care so much to reinforce their self-confidence because they receive a negative attitude. In the High School, things were better, because we had segregated classed according to the students' level so Teachers had more time and energy to boost the weaker students' feeling of confidence. They gave them supplementary materials, and extra work and they encouraged them to carry on their efforts with positive remarks. In Lykeio, students focus on the subjects of the Direction they chose to attend for which they are going to sit national exams and there is no interest in the subjects of General Education. This is a reality which I experience myself.

Question 5

INT. *Fine, lets move on. As I have told you a central point in the theory of mediation is the skill to learn how to learn. All students in both schools, boys and girls, have the view that it is very important. Is this happening at school? What is do you think?*

S2. No, I do not believe this is happening. Learning how to learn for me is learning how to reach information myself, even to learn how to use a dictionary, which is not happening.

S1. I also believe it is important, to be trained how to have access to sources but, this is not happening. Probably because Teachers believe that we will learn everything we have to know by their teaching in the classroom or they have the notion that we do not need to know any further than the coursebook or they think that we know everything from the “frontistirio” so we need no extra knowledge.

INT. *So, what you say refers to the way the lesson is being taught, am I right? Do your teachers teach how to use any other sources of material apart from the coursebook?*

S1. Yes, I refer to the way the lesson is done. If you mean to teach us how to use materials from other sources ie the internet, or the libraries, no most of them they do not.

INT. *But as far as I know your school has a good school library and PC laboratories with internet connection. Is that right?*

S2. Yes, but I think that the students themselves are not so willing to learn how to use other sources, most of them are negative to the idea of learning how to learn; it takes time and as I mentioned before they feel so much the time pressure as they are oriented to the national exams. I also believe that a lot of things should change in the curriculum. A different teaching methodology should be established. There is no space now for critical thinking to foster, which is important when you look into sources, there is not enough time. I think that the students do appreciate it is very important but they have no time to do it when studying in the Comprehensive Lyceum and these things take much of your already pressing time and energy. I also believe that there are some teachers that wish to integrate innovations in their teaching but they feel they are impeded by the Ministry's general curriculum directions and maybe some of them feel they have not the appropriate training to do so.

INT. *I see....*

Question 6

INT. *Now about the following question, the mediation of goal seeking, goal setting and goal achieving behavior. The majority of the students in both schools have the view that this feature is VI or QI. Do your teachers do this in their teaching practice?*

S1. No, I do not believe this is happening. Most of the teachers are indifferent for the students' goals, their dreams, for each person's goals. They just do their lesson and leave.

INT. *Can you elaborate on this? Why do you think this is happening?*

S1. Maybe they believe that students are capable of setting their own goals and they do not need help, maybe they do not know how to do it, maybe they do not have the time to help each one separately or they just receive negative feedback from students; they see that students are not so interested in the English subject so they adopt a negative attitude too.

S2. Yes, I believe that the students' goals in Lykeio are far more a personal issue and they have mainly to do with succeeding in the National entrance exams for the universities, with entering the School one has chosen, so they don't have to do with English as a school subject. Most of the teachers are aware of this so they do not interfere or they just feel disappointed by the students' negative attitude because as I mentioned the students' goals are very different and utilitarian from the

comprehensive and quality of knowledge they are going to gain while attending the Lyceum . However, teachers should show us how to set goals related with the use and usefulness of the English language which probably most students do not realize at the moment but they will in the future.for instance the usefulness of the language as a means of global communication through the internet, later for our studies , for people communication when traveling or for better job qualifications, things that most of us theoretically know but we do not realize their significance right now.

INT. *You are right, the notion that we all belong to a global community and can communicate, share ideas ...*

S2. Definitely, that English language is not only a subject to get a Pass grade but it a life long instrument of communication among people and it is so wrong that students set goals only regarding the national exams, I believe this is so disorientating for their ongoing life as adults, that they set goals only for utilitarian purposes.

Question 7

INT. *Students answers concerning the mediation of challenge, the search for novelty and complexity show that there are different perceptions in the two schools. The majority of the students in the Lyceum of Xylagani believe that it is VI or QI whereas in the Lyceum of Komotini the majority of the Ss believe it is QI or Not VI. What is your opinion about this?*

S1. Probably it has to do with the fact that in Xylagani, students are more dependant on teachers, probably because it is a village and the mentality of the people is different, I mean they appreciate more the teachers' work or probably because not all students can afford or do go to "frontistiria" so that teachers there set challenges for them instead of school.

INT. *I see, this an interesting point you make ...*

S2. Or, maybe as I said before it has to do with students' goals. In the 3rd Comprehensive Lyceum students have already set their personal goals which have to do with the National University entrance exams and they focus on these goals. The competition among students is demanding and very high, especially for the prestigious Schools, so students feel that seeking challenge in the subject of English that does not count for their assessment and their immediate future would mean extra work and extra time that they cannot afford.

Question 8

INT. *Lets move now to the mediation of the awareness of change. The majority of the students in both schools believe that it is VI or QI the teacher to help you evaluate your own progress. What are your views on this?*

S1. It is very important because it helps you to see at what level of progress you are and you need to try more. It would be helpful to evaluate your progress in the other subjects too.

INT. *OK. How do you think this could happen?*

S1. Definitely with the help of the teacher

INT. *Could you be more specific?*

S1. Probably to reflect on your image in the classroom.

INT. *That is....?*

S2. Probably with a form of a class diary or a progress diary; the teacher could ask you to reflect and write on your daily progress so when you read it you could see where you met difficulties and discuss it, but I don't think that many students would like this idea or would take it seriously at our age.

S1. Or it could be with the use of a questionnaire. The teacher could construct and give in a questionnaire to the students lets say every term or more so that she could see where they feel weak and help them.

INT. *Yes that would be a good idea. Could you think of any other ways? Do your Teachers do this?*

S1. No, I cannot think of any other ways, I have never bothered to think of evaluation as my responsibility. We are used to the teacher as being the evaluator.

S2. Yes, usually the teacher evaluates our progress. Of course we write tests, we take exams but the teacher gives the final grades; we do not have a word in the way our evaluation is being conducted. I have never thought about it actually. We know that we have to take the exams and we just sit for the exams. Now that I think about it we depend on the tests and the exams in Lyceum, but I guess that is how the system works. We are all aware of it.

INT. *Are you critical about your teachers' evaluation ?*

S2. I do not think we are. If we like the grade it's ok. If not, we cannot do anything else but try harder next term. All we care is to reach the grades we need to enter the School we're interested in or to pass the class. Usually we are not interested to reflect or to be critical on our progress evolution.

INT. *That's interesting*

Question 9

INT. *Do you believe it is important that your Ts develop in Ss a positive thinking fostering as a philosophy of life together with a search for an optimistic alternative without giving up ?How does your teacher do this?*

S2. I believe it is very important the T to develop this in Ss, keeping also in mind that school life is also a means of social development...Being a Comprehensive Lyceum student is sometimes so demanding and can be at times so frustrating that if you do not develop a positive thinking you cannot manage.

INT. *And how can a T help a Ss that is not a high achiever to develop a positive thinking?*

S1. The T should devote more time and effort to find a way to foster positive thinking in weaker Ss and strengthen the Ss self-confidence. But this is something that very few Ts get into trouble to do. Most of them the do the lesson in a common way for all students regardless Ss levels and real needs.

S2. I do not agree with this. Actually I remember a teacher of mine who from the very first days of her teaching researched and identified the weaker Ss and paid more attention to them in every lesson or after the lesson by asking even the shy ones if they met any difficult points and she gave help wherever she could. I think we cannot generalize here, it would not be fair; I think it depends very much on the Teacher and her beliefs.