The Role of Linguistic Mediation in Dance/Movement Therapy Training in China

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Abstract

The globalization of dance/movement therapy (DMT) training presents both opportunities and challenges within cross-cultural and bilingual educational contexts. This qualitative heuristic study examined linguistic mediation—the facilitation of communication across languages and cultural frameworks—in DMT training in China. Drawing on the experiences of English-speaking Western trainers, the study explored the role of linguistic mediation and the pedagogical strategies used to navigate cultural and linguistic differences. Four themes emerged: Embodiment as the Primary Language; Translator Competency, Partnership, and Flow; Adaptive Pedagogy: Flexibility and Linguistic-Temporal Responsiveness; and Cultural Humility and Curiosity. Cross-theme interpretive synthesis indicated that these processes were not independent but formed a reciprocal teaching ecology among trainers, translators, and students. The resulting Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model conceptualizes linguistic mediation as an embodied, relational, and culturally negotiated process rather than a linear transfer of information. The findings contribute to embodied pedagogy and interpreter-mediated education by offering implications for translator preparation, bilingual experiential curriculum design, adaptive pedagogy, and culturally situated DMT education.

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The globalization of dance/movement therapy (DMT), first documented by Dulicai and Berger (2005), has expanded significantly over the past two decades (Dunphy et al., 2021). China provides a particularly important context for examining these developments. Rapid social and economic changes have contributed to increasing attention to mental health and well-being (Moitra et al., 2023), while access to mental health services remains uneven (Wang & Tapia Granados, 2019).

Given these growing mental health needs and limitations in conventional service delivery, alternative and complementary therapeutic approaches have attracted increasing attention. Interest in DMT as a culturally resonant approach has grown, particularly given China's longstanding integration of body–mind philosophies (Dunphy et al., 2021). This growing interest in DMT has expanded opportunities for cross-cultural education (Liu et al., 2022). However, in China, this development has occurred in dialogue with Western-informed models of the profession, Chinese cultural traditions, and locally situated understandings of health, embodiment, and interpersonal relationships (Dunphy et al., 2021; Hang, 2023). Western DMT educators have increasingly offered training opportunities in East Asia, and students from the region continue to pursue training in the United States and Europe (Ko, 2020).

During a 2014 international panel at the ADTA conference, DMT trainers from five continents explored intersections between culture and DMT education. Their discussion emphasized "how different cultures develop distinctive approaches to training in DMT" (Capello, 2015, p. 25). Cross-cultural training environments therefore offer opportunities for rich exchange but also introduce complexities, particularly when trainers and students do not share a common language. In such environments, linguistic mediation becomes central. Rather than functioning solely as a conduit for translation, *linguistic mediation* refers to the relational and

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interpretive process of facilitating communication across languages and cultural frameworks. In educational settings, it shapes how instructors pace and adapt their teaching, how students engage with material, and how meaning is negotiated across cultural contexts.

The movement-based nature of DMT training (Millrod, 2024) also introduces distinctive challenges for linguistic mediation. Effective DMT teaching depends heavily upon immediacy—the capacity to respond to emerging movement, affective, and relational processes as they unfold. In many educational settings, linguistic mediation is conceptualized primarily as the transfer of information from one language to another. In DMT training, however, linguistic mediation occurs alongside the communication concepts such as kinesthetic empathy, attunement, embodied presence, and symbolism that may be difficult to capture through direct verbal translation. Such concepts are often learned through lived experience and relational participation rather than explicit explanation alone. Translators may find themselves navigating not only linguistic meaning but also culturally embedded understandings of emotion, bodily expression, interpersonal boundaries, and therapeutic relationships. Translation therefore becomes a process of negotiating meaning across both linguistic and embodied domains.

Although little research has examined linguistic mediation in DMT education, related scholarship from psychotherapy, counseling, and interpreter-mediated educational settings provides useful conceptual foundations. Tribe and Lane (2009) describe the interpreter role in psychotherapy as an "active third participant" who not only conveys meaning but also mediates cultural references, emotional tone, and therapeutic rapport. The inherent delay in consecutive interpretation can alter conversational rhythm, requiring therapists to adapt their communication style to sustain attunement across pauses.

Interpreters across multiple disciplines are described as clarifiers, cultural brokers, and

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advocates or mediators—not simply neutral conduits—in ways that enhance assessment and therapeutic alliance (Chang et al., 2020; Mirzaa et al., 2017; Scarvaglieri & Muntigl, 2022). In educational settings, interpreters have been framed as cognitive mediators who scaffold content, interaction, and emotional safety, drawing upon perspectives of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). This challenges assumptions of neutrality and positions interpreters as "invisible educators" (Gui, 2025). Similarly, Wang and McLaughlin (2022) found that interpreters in cross-cultural teacher development frequently shift between transmitting information, acting as cultural insiders, and constructing shared understandings, often without content expertise. While existing literature has explored interpreter-mediated psychotherapy and cross-cultural educational settings, little is known about how trainers adapt movement-based pedagogy, and facilitate experiential learning when instruction occurs across languages and cultures.

This heuristic study explored the experiences of Western DMT trainers teaching in China through linguistic mediation. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What is the experience of English-speaking Western trainers' facilitation of DMT training in China?
2. What is the experience of English-speaking Western trainers' facilitation of DMT training with linguistic mediators?
3. What pedagogical strategies do Western DMT trainers use to navigate linguistic and cultural differences in DMT training in China?

Methodology

Heuristic inquiry is a unique research method that places human experiences above numbers and is rooted in tacit knowledge that leads to a subjective and creative connection

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between the researcher and the phenomenon (Sela-Smith, 2002). Heuristic research also differs considerably from other methodologies as it does not exclude the researcher from the study; rather, it incorporates the researcher's experiences with the experiences of participants, referred to as co-researchers. Co-researchers are not viewed as mere subjects in the study but as important contributors who are an integral part of the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990). The process of heuristic research begins with a question or problem that the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. Thus, through a compassionate approach, the researcher moves towards an open discussion with co-researchers and facilitates an emotionally connected scientific inquiry (Anderson, 2000).

Six phases of heuristic research guide unfolding investigations and comprise the basic research design: the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis (Moustakis, 1990, p. 27).

Data Collection. In the first phase of the study, data collection occurred through this author's engagement in two four-day intensive teaching experiences in Beijing and Shanghai, China (approximately 60 instructional hours). The courses focused on practice-based competencies (ADTA, 2024, pp. 35-37), specifically exploring the work of Marian Chace, a foundational theorist in dance/movement therapy (Levy, 2005). Chace's approach emphasizes here-and-now movement engagement with clients to elicit, develop, and expand movement into group interactions (Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993). To ensure reflexivity before beginning data collection, this author documented personal experiences, assumptions, and biases in a reflexive journal. This process aimed to enhance awareness and track how personal perspectives might influence the study (Finlay, 2002).

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During the courses, students participated in movement-based experiential learning (Millrod, 2024) that illustrated principles of mirroring, attunement, "picking up", parts of a session, leadership development, and movement intervention. Students facilitated mini-group sessions by responding to the movement contributions of their peers in the here-and-now to support the expansion, development, and reflection of movement experiences. English-to-Chinese and Chinese-to-English linguistic mediation occurred throughout the teaching process by an experienced translator/mediator who was also a trained dance/movement therapist. As both the course instructor and researcher, this author focused on how immediate guidance fostered this process and how linguistic mediation influenced the students' engagement and understanding. Additionally, this author tracked any observations in learning gaps, the questions students raised, and the progression of their skills throughout the four-day courses. After each class, this author took detailed field notes and engaged in 'memoing' (McGrath, 2021). These memos captured spontaneous thoughts, emotional reactions, questions, and insights that emerged.

Co-Researchers. This study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Rider University and was determined to be exempt from further review (Protocol #R_6PMhVVjd9sb11qo).

After returning to the U.S., consultation occurred with four co-researchers recruited via invitation and referral. All co-researchers provided informed consent and participated voluntarily, with the right to withdraw at any time. All co-researchers were female, experienced DMT trainers, who have taught similar courses in China and internationally (see Table 1). Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted over Zoom and transcribed using Otter.ai transcription software. Transcriptions were reviewed and manually corrected for

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accuracy by a research assistant.

Each interview began with orienting questions to understand co-researchers' professional histories, including their years of experience in DMT education, teaching contexts, and exposure to bilingual instructional settings. The interviews then progressed into a more focused exploration of their experiences working with linguistic mediators, particularly within English–Chinese translation contexts. Co-researchers were invited to reflect on the embodied dimensions of translation, including how movement-based learning intersects with language translation. Follow-up questions probed perceived challenges, adaptations in teaching strategies, and the negotiation of cultural and linguistic meaning-making.

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Table 1. *Co-Researchers' Experiences*

Trainer/ Educator #	**# of years teaching**	**International Teaching experience**	**Nature of Courses Taught**
1	40+	China, Finland, Italy, Spain, Turkey, United States	LBMS, Chace technique, Creative Movement, Group dynamics, & Authentic Movement
2	16	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom.	LBMS, Cultural competencies, embodied decision making, Transference & Resistance
3	28	China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, United States	Chace technique, Group Dynamics, Personal Growth/Self Awareness; Improvisation, Clinical supervision, Transference & Resistance, Authentic Movement
4	25+	China, Hong Kong, Czech Republic, United States	Chace technique, Authentic Movement, improvisation
5	20+	Belgium, China, Cuba, Italy, United States	Chace technique, Group Dynamics, Child-focused application, Trauma-focused application

Data Analysis Procedures. Data analysis proceeded through a multi-stage, iterative process initially utilizing first-cycle color coding to identify preliminary patterns associated with the research questions within the data. Initial codes were consolidated into four primary code groupings: Teaching Strategies (TS; n = 72), Cross-Cultural Considerations (CC; n = 45), Linguistic Mediator (LM; n = 38), and Linguistic Mediation Processes (LMP; n = 39). A second-cycle method was then used to aggregate these initial labels into more detailed categories of discrete data segments. These descriptive codes were further organized into 13 categories. Through a collaborative coding process, the researcher and a research assistant coded the transcripts separately and subsequently engaged in analytic dialogue to compare, refine, and synthesize codes into thematic categories. This co-analysis supported reflexivity, reduced individual bias, and strengthened interpretive credibility (Elliot, 2018).

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Through thematic clustering, the categories were synthesized into four overarching themes representing central patterns in the data (Saldaña, 2021). The four themes were subsequently examined across the three research questions rather than treated as discrete findings. This cross-question comparison revealed substantial overlap among experiences of cross-cultural facilitation, linguistic mediation, and pedagogical adaptation. The themes therefore became the basis for a final interpretive synthesis in which relationships among the themes, rather than their sequence alone, were examined.

The final synthesis followed the heuristic movement from thematic explication toward interpretation and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990), while retaining a distinction between themes emerging from the data and the subsequent model developed by the researcher.

Results

Four salient themes emerged from the data: (a) Embodiment as the Primary Language; (b) Translator Competency, Partnership, and Flow; (c) Adaptive Pedagogy: Flexibility and Linguistic-Temporal Responsiveness; and (d) Cultural Humility and Curiosity: Mutual Learning and Positionality. Although analytically distinguishable, the themes overlapped across the three research questions and shaped one another within teaching encounters.

Theme 1: Embodiment as the Primary Language

The first theme concerns the primacy of the body as a communicative and pedagogical resource when linguistic immediacy is constrained. Across trainers' accounts, movement emerged as a central means of connection and instruction. In this way, the body functioned as the "lingua franca" of the classroom, a shared medium through which meaning could be co-constructed independent of complete verbal translation. Trainers described using their own

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bodies to physically embody concepts that resisted verbal explanation, while also relying on sensing and rhythm to assess understanding and guide pedagogical decision-making in real time.

"trusting the movement is also a language" (E1)

"move first, talk later" (E3)

"using [my] body to make the point"; "bring the body into my speaking" (E1)

"I norm[ed] this through a complex number of signals" (E2)

Trainers also reported a heightened reliance on embodied sensing within the classroom. Without access to verbal content, trainers described attending closely to spatial dynamics, energetic shifts, and nonverbal cues to evaluate student understanding and emotional states. This shift suggests that, in the absence of shared language, the body becomes not only expressive but interpretive—serving as a primary site of attunement and assessment.

"We can't understand the small adjectives of what they're saying, but there's a sense. . .and that's what we go with." (E1)

"Particularly because I don't have access to the language, I think my observation skills are on all the time. . . [I] end up going into this hypervigilance state of entrusting a lot more in my body" (E2)

"I'm more attuned to my body instincts ... a lot more then when I have the luxury of language" (E2)

"I can feel it in my own body . . . even though I'm not understanding the words. . .there's some kind of . . .emotional tone in the air even if I don't understand." (E3)

Taken together, these accounts suggest that linguistic mediation did not simply reduce access to verbal information; it shifted the mode through which trainers came to know what was occurring in the classroom. When verbal comprehension became less available, movement,

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rhythm, affect, spatial relationships, and somatic responses became increasingly important sources of pedagogical information. Embodiment therefore functioned not only as an alternative means of expressing meaning, but as a means through which understanding was generated and pedagogical adaptations informed.

Theme 2: Translator Competency, Partnership, and Flow

The second theme highlights the *translator's* embodied stance, professional competency, and relational attunement as central to instructional quality and classroom flow. Beyond linguistic accuracy, trainers emphasized the importance of the translator's embodied knowledge in shaping the effectiveness of cross-cultural instruction.

Trainers consistently distinguished between translators with DMT training or embodied familiarity and those without, noting differences in pedagogical flow and coherence.

Translators who demonstrated *"knowing in the body how to be"* (E3) enabled the trainer–translator relationship to function as a cohesive pedagogical unit rather than a sequential exchange and *"makes things very embodied"* and *"flow."* (E1)

Valued competencies of the translator/mediator included:

"a lot of experience in psychotherapy" (E4)

"comfortable with intimacy" (E4)

"comfort in talking about something difficult, personal, emotional" (E4)

"understanding embodied process"; "bodily understanding" (E4; E5)

not just familiarity but *"level of experience in the field"* (E2)

"trained dance therapists; already understand the work" (E3)

"clarify in a way that supports my teaching and doesn't go off track" (E3)

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In contrast, translators/mediators without DMT familiarity were more associated with moments of fragmentation, miscommunication, and reduced instructional momentum. Co-researchers described instances where translators paused frequently, sought clarification, or inserted their own interpretations, disrupting flow.

Over time, translator–trainer relationships often evolved into collaborative partnerships characterized by trust, shared embodied awareness, and professional reciprocity. The quality of the translator partnership was one of the most influential factors in the teaching experience and supported flow and attunement in the class. When this partnership was strong, it "lightened the load" for trainers.

When translators were less attuned to movement processes, trainers experienced disruptions in rhythm and continuity. Translation was described as *"bumpy"* or *"dragged"* (E4), at times *"disembodying"* the immediacy of communication (E4). Excessive verbal explanation was also experienced as interruptive: *"there's a stop in the flow. . .we wait."* (E1) and *"while everybody's listening, that can slow the movement down or interfere in the movement."* (E3)

Finding "flow" appeared to be a central feature of the trainer–translator process. Trainers discussed qualities in translators that supported faster translation and the capacity to *"mov[e] through the gap"* (E4) created by disruption. The translator's spatial positioning and proximity to the trainer also influenced flow, with closer physical alignment supporting continuity in instruction.

These accounts suggest that translator competency was not simply an individual linguistic or technical skill, but a relational capacity that shaped how meaning moved within the teaching environment. In this sense, the translator became neither an invisible conduit nor a replacement teacher, but a relational participant in the co-mediation of meaning.

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Theme 3: Adaptive Pedagogy: Flexibility and Linguistic-Temporal Responsiveness

The third theme reflects the pedagogical adaptations required in response to the temporal and relational demands of teaching through linguistic mediation. Co-researchers described a deliberate reduction in verbal content, recognizing that excessive talking disrupted movement-based engagement. *"I am concerned that too much talking is going to bring the movement to a halt or will interfere with it because they're listening."* (E3)

Co-researchers reported using shorter verbal segments, training translators to interrupt extended speech, and restructuring class sessions to prioritize embodied experience before verbal reflection. Intentional decisions centering movement first supported temporal responsiveness: *"[By] using the language as the body before I even bring them into speaking to one another. That . . . lays the field. . .And then we give words to that. . .but that's the immediacy of the body, embodied experience first"* (E1). This reorganization reflects a shift in pedagogical emphasis—from verbal explanation to embodied experience as the primary entry point for learning.

A particularly salient challenge involved teaching Chace technique, which relies on moment-to-moment responsiveness. Trainers noted that translation introduced temporal gaps that disrupted the immediacy essential to this approach. In contrast, experiences such as improvisation, group movement, and authentic movement were more adaptable, as they allowed for embodied engagement followed by delayed verbal processing.

Small-group structures allowed students to process material in their native language without mediation. This both restored linguistic autonomy and enabled trainers to observe class dynamics through embodied interaction rather than verbal feedback.

Other adaptive strategies included responsiveness to shifting rhythms within the teaching process; *"figuring out the flow"* (E3) as an ongoing task; adjusting pacing, verbalization, and

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structure to accommodate translation; *"needing to clarify for translator in simpler language"* (E4); *"I needed to teach my translators to interrupt me"* (E3); reducing verbal load (*"reduce words,"* E3); using small groups to reduce reliance on translation (E1; E3; E4; E5); accepting uncertainty (*"yielding/letting go [not knowing what translator is saying]*," E3); and recognizing when translators are also making adaptations (E3; E4; E5).

These findings revealed that adaptation was also reciprocal rather than one-directional. Trainers adjusted to translators and students, while students' responses and translators' interventions influenced the trainer's subsequent choices. Adaptive pedagogy can therefore be understood as an ongoing process of mutual adjustment in which teaching and learning were continually reorganized in response to what emerged within the relational field.

Theme 4: Cultural Humility and Curiosity: Mutual Learning and Positionality

The fourth theme reflects the epistemological and ethical orientations shaping cross-cultural teaching practice. Co-researchers described an intentional effort to decenter Western frameworks and engage students as co-constructors of knowledge. One participant emphasized this realization: *"The US is not the model. It's one model"* (E2). Trainers described the need to hold *"this other third in-between space"* (E5)—a liminal zone between Western and Eastern frameworks, where neither cultural paradigm dominates. In this "in-between" space, the dance becomes an act of negotiation and mutual adaptation.

Relational trust was identified as foundational to this process. Co-researchers described the need for ongoing self-examination and cultural humility throughout the teaching process, including *"an opening in me… to consider a different perspective and to see how blind that I might have been"* (E5).

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This decentering was enacted through concrete pedagogical practices, including adapting theoretical models (e.g., reframing Laban concepts through Yin/Yang [E1]) and incorporating local systems of meaning. Translators also functioned as cultural mediators, with trainers noting that they *"relied heavily on the translators to translate in ways that are culturally appropriate"* (E3).

Co-researchers also described navigating cultural differences in power, hierarchy, authority, and communication norms, including *"the educational system in China, where the teacher is the absolute authority in the room"* (E3). Some expressed discomfort at their positional authority, naming the feeling of *"parachuting in"* (E2) and grappling with their responsibility as cultural outsiders.

One account illustrates the complexity of cultural norms around feedback and "face." After students communicated concerns about a class through a translator rather than directly to the trainer, the trainer initially interpreted the indirect communication as disrespectful. The translator explained that direct complaint would itself violate culturally meaningful expectations of respect. In response, the trainer and local coordinators addressed concerns collectively, illustrating how culturally attuned relational strategies can be necessary when assumptions about appropriate communication differ.

This author's own teaching experience provided reflexive learning regarding the cultural assumptions embedded in seemingly familiar pedagogical practices. In one closing exercise, this author introduced an "I am" movement activity intended to support individual self-recognition. Drawing from experience teaching in the United States, the exercise was designed to invite self-affirming statements such as "I am compassionate," or "I am strong," with the group reflecting

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these qualities back to the speaker. However, several students initially responded with negative self-statements such as “I am fat” or “I am not good at [various qualities].”

The experience prompted this author to recognize that the pedagogical assumptions embedded within the exercise—including an emphasis on individualized self-definition and affirmation—could not be presumed to carry the same meaning across cultural contexts. What had seemed to this author to be a culturally neutral invitation to self-reflection was producing an unintended form of self-criticism requiring a reconsideration not only the activity but the assumptions underlying its design within the cultural context.

A second teaching experience further illuminated the reciprocal nature of cultural and pedagogical adaptation. While facilitating an experiential exercise using sequential images, this author made a pointing gesture with her toe toward an image on the floor while explaining the activity. A student later explained that, because of the trust that had developed with the instructor, she felt able to offer feedback about the gesture. From the student's perspective, pointing with the toe or appearing to “step on the image” could be experienced as squashing or disrespecting the story represented by the picture.

This exchange demonstrated that cultural adaptation was occurring relationally and bidirectionally. The student became a source of knowledge for the teacher, while the teacher's willingness to receive the feedback altered the conditions of the relationship. The student's ability to challenge the instructor without protecting the instructor from discomfort also suggested that trust had become sufficiently established for knowledge to move in the opposite direction—from student to teacher.

Taken together, these experiences suggest that cultural humility involved more than developing sensitivity to cultural difference; it required the trainers to recognize the cultural

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assumptions embedded within their own pedagogical practices. Cultural humility therefore became an ongoing process of examining positionality, receiving information that challenged existing assumptions, and allowing local knowledge to reshape pedagogical decisions. This process also introduced a reciprocal dimension to teaching. When students and translators could question, redirect, or expand the trainer's understanding, they became participants in the production of pedagogical knowledge rather than recipients of knowledge imported from elsewhere. Cultural curiosity thus created conditions for a more relational form of authority in which expertise could move in multiple directions.

Interpretive Synthesis: The Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model

The Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model (see Figure 1) emerged through the interpretive synthesis of the four themes and the relationships among them. The model is not presented as a fifth theme or as a construct directly named by co-researchers. Rather, it represents the researcher's heuristic synthesis of a relational pattern that became visible across the three research questions. As the analysis progressed, experiences initially understood as belonging to distinct domains of cross-cultural facilitation, linguistic mediation, and pedagogical adaptation increasingly overlapped. Across these domains, trainers described a recurring process in which trainer, translator, and students continually adjusted to one another through movement, language, timing, observation, affect, and cultural interpretation.

Figure 1. *Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model.*

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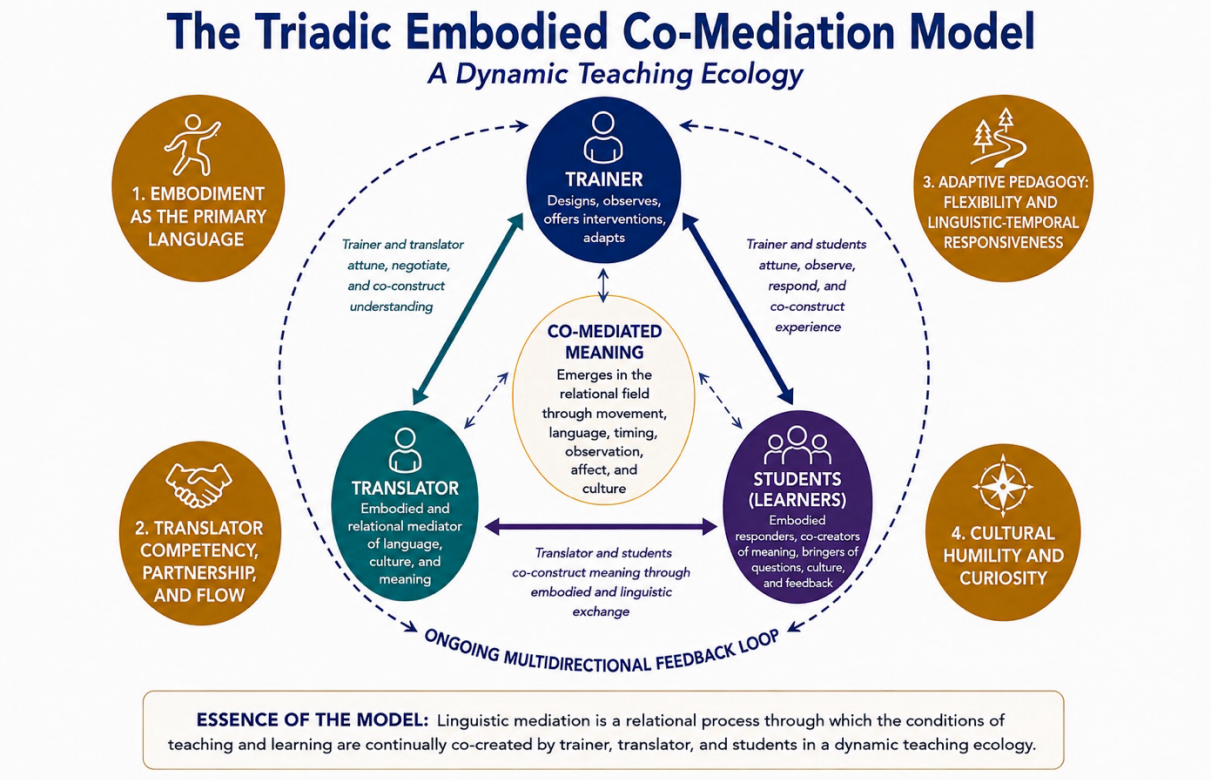


Figure 1 Note. Illustrative images were generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2026) and subsequently edited and arranged by the author. The conceptual model and its organization were developed by the author.

This synthesis suggested that linguistic mediation in DMT education is not adequately represented by a linear model of trainer-to-translator-to-student transmission. Instead, meaning is co-mediated within a dynamic teaching ecology. The translator participates in this ecology as an embodied and relational mediator, but so too do students, whose embodied responses, questions, cultural knowledge, and feedback can alter the trainer's pedagogical choices. Trainers, in turn, modify language, pacing, structure, and intervention in response to information emerging from the relational field.

Within this ecology, the four themes perform different but interdependent functions. These dimensions operate reciprocally rather than sequentially. Embodied observation informs pedagogical adaptation; adaptation alters the conditions of interaction; changes in interaction create opportunities for students and translators to contribute cultural and embodied knowledge

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that can challenge trainers' assumptions and reshape subsequent pedagogical decisions. In this sense, the model conceptualizes linguistic mediation not as an obstacle inserted between teaching and learning, but a relational process through which the conditions of teaching and learning are continually co-created. At the same time, the model should be understood within the limits of this study: it emerged from the experiences and interpretations of Western trainers and does not represent the perspectives of translators or students in China.

Discussion

Embodiment as Epistemology in Linguistic Mediation

A central contribution of this study is the finding that linguistic mediation can make the epistemological function of embodiment more visible. Trainers described relying more heavily on bodily sensing, movement, rhythm, affect, and spatial awareness when verbal comprehension was incomplete. In these moments, the body was not merely an alternative channel through which an already formed idea could be communicated; it became a source through which trainers assessed understanding and generated pedagogical knowledge. This finding extends scholarship on embodied pedagogy by demonstrating how linguistic disruption can expose the extent to which DMT teaching depends upon forms of knowing that are sensory, relational, and temporal as well as linguistic (Nguyen & Larson, 2015).

This finding is particularly relevant to DMT because embodied immediacy is not an ancillary feature of the discipline. Movement, observation, affective resonance, and moment-to-moment responsiveness are embedded within the development of clinical competencies (ADTA, 2024). When translation introduces additional linguistic and temporal steps, these embodied dimensions become more explicit. The resulting pedagogical challenge is therefore not simply how to preserve the content of an instructor's words, but how to maintain access to the embodied

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processes through which learning occurs. The findings suggest that trainers can respond by treating movement and embodied experience as primary sites of communication and knowledge construction, with verbal reflection serving as one form of elaboration rather than the sole route to understanding.

From Translation to Co-Mediation

The findings also extend scholarship that conceptualizes interpreters as active participants rather than neutral conduits (Roy, 2000; Tribe & Lane, 2009; Tribe & Morrissey, 2004). In the present study, however, the translator's participation was distinctive because DMT required mediation of movement, affect, timing, and relational processes in addition to verbal content. Trainers valued translators who possessed familiarity with DMT or embodied therapeutic processes because such familiarity appeared to support continuity between the trainer's intention, the translator's mediation, and students' embodied engagement.

This finding suggests that the relevant construct is not simply translator competence but co-mediation. Translation became a relational process in which meaning was shaped through the interaction of three positions rather than transmitted through a single pathway. This is why the model is triadic. The translator is central, but students are also active participants whose movement responses, questions, cultural knowledge, and feedback can alter what the trainer does next. The trainer likewise affects the translator and students through pacing, demonstration, verbal density, and openness to interruption.

Adaptive Pedagogy as Reciprocal Adjustment

The temporal disruption associated with consecutive translation has been documented across interpreter-mediated interaction (Angelelli, 2004; Wadensjö, 1998). The present findings extend this concern into a movement-based educational context in which timing is itself

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pedagogical. Trainers described challenges when teaching approaches such as Chace technique (Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993) depended on moment-to-moment responsiveness and the integration of verbal and nonverbal interaction. The issue was therefore not simply that translation required additional time; pauses and shifts in attention could alter the very conditions through which embodied learning occurred.

The adaptive strategies identified in the findings can be understood as forms of scaffolding reconfigured for multilingual embodied learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Rather than adding more explanation to compensate for linguistic difference, trainers reorganized the learning environment so that students could access movement-based experience with less reliance on mediated speech.

Importantly, the findings do not support an interpretation in which adaptation is the responsibility of the Western trainer alone. Students and translators also shaped the process by responding, interrupting, clarifying, redirecting, and contributing cultural knowledge. Adaptive pedagogy was therefore reciprocal. This distinction matters because a model based only on trainer adaptation could inadvertently preserve the same hierarchy that cultural humility seeks to question: the Western educator remains the one who determines the pedagogical norm while others adapt to it. A reciprocal model instead treats the teaching environment itself as responsive, with all participants capable of influencing how learning unfolds.

Cultural Humility, Power, and Epistemic Reciprocity

The findings invite a more critical understanding of cultural humility than cultural awareness alone. Consistent with Tervalon and Murray-García's (1998) conceptualization, cultural humility involves ongoing self-reflection and recognition of the limits of one's own cultural perspective. In this study, however, humility became particularly consequential when

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trainers encountered moments in which their pedagogical assumptions did not produce the meanings they expected. Rather than treating these moments as problems to correct, trainers can use them to examine the cultural assumptions embedded within their practices and to redistribute interpretive authority.

This has implications for the localization of DMT education. Western-informed frameworks may provide important foundations for training, but their transfer into another cultural context should not be treated as a neutral movement of knowledge from one location to another. The question is not only whether a DMT concept can be translated linguistically, but whether the assumptions about emotional expression, authority, embodiment, relationship, and therapeutic practice embedded within that concept remain meaningful in the local context. The "in-between" space described by co-researchers can therefore be understood as a site of negotiation in which neither Western nor local knowledge is presumed to have complete authority.

This perspective also shifts the emphasis from cultural sensitivity toward epistemic reciprocity. If students and local translators are positioned only as recipients or cultural informants, Western pedagogical authority remains intact. Reciprocal learning requires more: local participants must have opportunities to influence how DMT is interpreted, taught, and adapted. Such reciprocity is consistent with calls for critical consciousness regarding the politics of the body and the cultural and colonial inheritances of somatic disciplines (Caldwell, 2019; Kawano & Chang, 2019). Therefore the findings suggest that cultural humility should be accompanied by structural opportunities for local knowledge to shape curriculum, examples, experiential practices, and assessment.

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The Body as Epistemological Commons

These findings support the concept of the body as an epistemological commons: a shared, relational space of knowing through which understanding is collectively constructed across linguistic and cultural differences. The commons does not reside within any individual body and does not imply sameness. Rather, it refers to a shared relational space in which trainers, translators, and students contribute embodied, linguistic, cultural, and experiential knowledge to an ongoing process of meaning-making. Movement can therefore create opportunities for shared inquiry without requiring participants to have identical interpretations or cultural frameworks.

This interpretation extends the study's central argument beyond the claim that movement can function as a "lingua franca." The metaphor of a common language can imply that movement eliminates difference. The findings suggest something more complex: movement can create a medium through which difference becomes available for observation, negotiation, and response. The epistemological commons is consequently not a space in which cultural distinctions disappear but one in which multiple forms of knowing can participate in the construction of meaning. This interpretation resonates with scholarship on embodied cognition, which argues that cognition is grounded in sensorimotor engagement with the world rather than operating as a purely abstract or linguistic process (Stokes, 2025).

The concept also clarifies the relationship between the Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model and existing scholarship. Research on embodied pedagogy emphasizes the integration of bodily and cognitive experience (Nguyen & Larson, 2015), while interpreter scholarship has increasingly conceptualized mediation as interactive and culturally situated (Pöchhacker, 2021; Roy, 2000; Tribe & Lane, 2009). The present model brings these strands together in a DMT-

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specific context and proposes a way of understanding not only what happens when translation occurs, but how translation changes the ecology of embodied teaching and learning.

Practical Implications

There are several implications for cross-cultural and linguistically mediated DMT education. First, translator preparation should extend beyond linguistic competence to include somatic literacy, familiarity with DMT concepts and experiential processes, and opportunities to participate in movement-based learning. Second, trainers and translators could establish working agreements regarding pacing, interruption, clarification, terminology, and how embodied demonstrations will be mediated. Third, bilingual experiential curricula can reduce dependence on continuous verbal translation by sequencing movement and sensory experience before reflection, using shorter verbal segments, and incorporating dyads or small groups where students can process material in their primary language. Fourth, programs can build opportunities for local adaptation into curriculum and assessment rather than treating Western training practices as fixed standards to be transferred unchanged. Finally, local linguistic mediators, translators, students, and educators should have meaningful opportunities to influence curricular examples, pedagogical strategies, and interpretations of DMT concepts.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited by its small sample and its exclusive reliance on the experiences of Western DMT trainers. Although the heuristic design intentionally centered the author's and co-researchers' lived experiences, the absence of translator and student perspectives limits the breadth of claims that can be made about the triadic teaching relationship. The Triadic Embodied Co-Mediation Model should therefore be understood as a heuristic synthesis of Western

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educators' experiences rather than a comprehensive account of DMT education in China. The China-based sample also limits transferability to other cultural contexts.

Future research should examine the model from multiple positions within the triad, particularly the experiences of translators and students who participate in linguistically mediated DMT education. Comparative studies across regions could further explore which aspects of the model appear to be specific to particular cultural contexts and which may have broader relevance to international DMT education. Future studies should also examine how locally developed adaptations influence the evolution of DMT practice rather than treating adaptation primarily as a modification of Western-derived models.

Conclusion: Toward an Embodied Pedagogical Ecology

As DMT education continues to develop across linguistic and cultural contexts, ethically responsive training will require attention not only to what is translated, but to who participates in defining meaning, whose knowledge shapes pedagogy, and how local contexts influence the development of the profession. In this sense, linguistic mediation can become not merely a challenge to overcome, but an opportunity to make the relational, embodied, and culturally negotiated nature of DMT education more visible.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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