Qualitative analysis of mediational strategies in emotionalized dynamic assessment of L2 reading comprehension

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Abstract

Currently available assessment tools and procedures are lacking one important dimension in providing full understanding of language learners' potential ability. This article focuses on the pedagogical application of emotional intelligence (EI) activities integrated by Dynamic Assessment (DA, henceforth), a testing approach nurtured by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, to second language reading instruction. Our main goal is to gain some insights into learner's abilities and find those forms of mediation during emotionally-based dynamic assessment (EDA) intervention that best nurture the development of reading achievement. In this article, learners' improvement in second language (L2) reading comprehension is illustrated with examples of intermediate learners of English completing reading tasks with support from a mediator. The article concludes with recommendations for future research on DA and EI in L2 development.

Keywords: dynamic assessment; emotional intelligence; motivation; language achievement; qualitative analysis; reading comprehension

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1. Introduction

1.1 Emotional Intelligence

In the last two decades, a substantial amount of attention has been paid to the subject of emotional intelligence (EI). There have been two views on EI conceptualization, one defining it as a kind of cognitive ability, enhanced by Mayer and Salovey (1997), according to which EI consists of emotional abilities and one defining it as a kind of trait, suggesting that EI encompasses a variety of emotional skills, including aspects of personality (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).Theoretical accounts were soon followed by empirical attempts to design methods to enhance this construct and find its possible relationship with various skills (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg et al., 1997; Jaeger, 2003; MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2011; Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004).

While there is a substantial body of literature on emotion in educational setting, affect and emotion has received relatively little attention in Foreign/Second Language Acquisition context. As Garrett and Young (2009) point out: "affect and emotion are terms that have been in the shadows of discussions of classroom foreign language learning, where the primary focus has been on the development of knowledge and use of the new language" (209). The importance of studying the emotional state of learners in foreign language context has recently been highlighted in a number of studies (Abdolrezapour & Tavakoli, 2012; Dewaele, 2005, 2008; Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008) and there is a growing number of special issues devoted to emotion in SLA and especially in multilingualism research (Eisenstein Ebsworth, 2010: special issue on Affective Aspects of Second and Foreign Languages; Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2004a: special issue on Languages and Emotions: A Cross-linguistic Perspective; 2004b: special issue on Bilingualism and Emotions).

The roles of emotional factors in foreign/second language learning contexts have been addressed with reference to a number of methodologies such as Suggestopedia and some models such as Krashen's Monitor Model (see Pishghadam, 2009). In the input hypothesis, Krashen proposed the existence of an affective filter. "Positive emotions were related to a low affective filter, thereby letting in more input, meaning that more learning would occur; negative emotions were related to a high affective filter, thereby keeping out input, meaning that less learning would occur" (Swain, 2013, p. 198).

More recently a growing body of literature has begun to support the predictive validity of emotional intelligence in EFL/ESL contexts. Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) explored the relationship between EQ, IQ, and verbal intelligence with the academic achievement of students majoring in English language. They found that academic achievement was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence (intrapersonal, stress management, and general mood competencies). In another study, Pishghadam (2009) examined the role of emotional intelligence in second language learning by matching EQ-i data with the students' academic records, scores in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. He found that second language learning was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence.

In another attempt, Dewaele et al. (2008) found a negative relationship between trait EI and foreign language anxiety (FLA) which was defined as *"the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language (L2) contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284).* A major drawback of EI models and previous EI studies is that they only "identify whether a person is emotionally intelligent or not" or whether there is any relationship between EI and foreign language learning but

they do *"not give any specific guidelines as to how the person can actually enhance his emotional intelligence" (Gayathri & Meenakshi, 2012, p. 76)*. In a quite recent attempt, Abdolrezapour and Tavakoli (2012) found a high positive correlation between one's achievement in reading comprehension and her/his emotional intelligence. However, in their study the efficacy of the intervention was assessed through standard assessment procedures and the dynamic nature of learning was neglected.

1.2 Dynamic assessment

Since the introduction of ZPD, in the last five decades, an increasing number of psychologists and educators have recognized the potential relevance of ZPD for assessment, and consequently more and more systematic procedures integrating mediation into assessment have emerged (see Haywood & Lidz, 2007; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002 for a review). Dynamic assessment is the assessment of the ZPD (or learning potential) and is basically grounded in Vygotsky's innovative insight that in the zone of proximal development instruction leads to development (Lantolf & Thorn, 2006). The notion of dynamic assessment was coined by Vygotsky's colleague Luria (1961) and it was Reuven Feuerstein who popularized it and tried to contrast it with other forms of assessment: statistic in his own terms (Feuerstein, Rand, & Hoffman, 1979). DA is usually contrasted with static testing (non-dynamic assessment) to refer to different modes of evaluating individual's cognitive capacities which are on the verge of development in addition to an understanding of learners' current capabilities which is gained in non-dynamic procedures.

The pedagogical applications of DA in applied linguistics have only recently been examined by a number of researchers (Ableeva, 2010; Antón, 2009; Kozulin & Garb, 2002; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2005). Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) conducted one of the pioneering studies on DA which reports on the authors' collaboration with ESL learners struggling to control various grammatical features in their production of compositions for a writing intensive class. Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005) point to the mediation conducted during the assessment procedure as the basic difference between DA and traditional assessment procedures, which dichotomize instruction and assessment. DA determines the extent to which the learner's performance is modifiable, while traditional assessments, which look for stability, regard this change as a threat to reliability.

The six DA-based case studies examined in Ableeva (2008) suggest that DA is a valuable qualitative tool which allows instructors to diagnose the actual level of students' listening abilities as well as their potential levels. And Schneider and Ganschow (2000) related DA to the instruction of students experiencing foreign or L2 learning problems. Specifically, they called for instructor/student interaction as a way to teach and assess students' awareness of metalinguistic skills. In their recent attempt, Lantolf and Poehner (2011) report the implementation of DA principles with an entire class of elementary school learners of Spanish as a second language, where the teacher engaged individual learners as well as the whole class in activities that required them to call upon lexical knowledge and to observe basic grammatical conventions, including marking substantive-modifier accord. The teacher framed activities as games, but they were sufficiently demanding that learners required various forms of mediation to work through them.

The problem with most current L2 DA studies is that they have not been implemented in the regular classroom pedagogy; rather, they have been conducted in separate sessions along normal procedures to a limited number of learners (e.g. Ableeva, 2008; Ableeva, 2010). While, if integrated into normal instructional activities, DA would be introduced to multiple adolescents within a limited time frame which is more convenient in terms of time, space, staffing and financial considerations. In addition, being in a classroom atmosphere with peers would help the teacher in running activities and would enhance the effectiveness of the intervention.

During the last decade, there has been a growing interest in the potential of Vygotskyan SCT to illuminate processes of cognitive development (Lantolf, 2000). Ghafar Samar and Dehqan (2013), in a recent attempt, investigated the application of SCT in an EFL reading class. Also, a group of researchers, through rethinking

educational practices, have devised a number of methodologies, known as dynamic assessment, to understand and develop learner's cognitive abilities (Lidz & Elliott, 2000). Few, however, have paid attention to the inseparability of cognition and emotion in these developmental processes (Goldstein, 1999; Holzman, 2009). The reason for integrating dynamic assessment procedures with emotional activities in the current study lies in the underlying tenets of dynamic assessment. In DA, we first try to identify existing obstacles to more effective learning and then we try to find ways to remove those obstacles; in the final stage, we assess the effects of removing those obstacles on subsequent learning and performance. These obstacles can better be removed by paying attention to learners' emotions and involving their emotions into the learning stages. This qualitative attempt aims to get a better picture of mediator-learner interactions during dynamic assessment procedures of L2 reading comprehension. The research question to be addressed is: What are different forms of mediation during EDA intervention?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The population under study included the EFL learners who enrolled in a language center in Iran. A total of fourteen students studying Interchange 2 participated in this study. Learners were native speakers of Farsi and they had taken English courses for one to two years. Their level of English proficiency was intermediate; that is, all participants were currently taking the intermediate EFL course offered by the institution. None of these participants had additional exposure to the English language, apart from the regular TV programs and the Internet. Only three participants had ever been to a country where English was spoken as a native language, and they reported a length of residence ranging from 4 days to 1 month. All participants were female and they varied in age from 12 to 15. Participants agreed to be videotaped and audiotaped while studying. Two camcorders were used to record participants' activities: one to capture the individual who was performing the task and the other to capture the larger scene, including the participant and the peers as well as the instructor. An external microphone connected to the main camcorder was used to capture low-volume sounds made by participants.

2.2 Instruments

For the purpose of the present study, a number of instruments were used which will be described in order:

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF)

In this study, the short form of the TEIQue (Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006) comprised of 30 items was used to measure the students' emotional intelligence prior to the experiment. TEIQue-ASF is a simplified version, in terms of wording and syntactic complexity, of the adult short form of the TEIQue developed for use with adolescents aged 12-18 years. All items are sampled from the 15 subscales of the adult trait EI sampling domain (two items per subscale). The test yields scores on four factors, namely well-being (covering self-esteem, happiness, and optimism), self-control (covering low impulsiveness, stress management, and emotion regulation), emotionality (covering emotion expression, relationships, empathy, and emotion perception), and sociability (covering assertiveness, emotion management, and social awareness) in addition to global trait EI. Example items include 'I can control my anger when I want to', 'I'm happy with my life', and 'I'm good at getting along with my classmates'. Higher scores on the TEIQue-ASF indicated higher levels of trait EI. We opted for the short version with 10-minute completion time, because we had time limitation and there was a concern that the participants might not be able to complete the longer version (e.g. due to reading difficulties). Subjects responded on a 7-point Likert scale continuum from 'Completely Disagree (number 1)' to 'Completely Agree (number 7)'. In this study the reliability of the test was found to be relatively high (Cronbach's α =.89). Factor analyses also provide support for the construct validity of the questionnaire; in this sample, confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence for the four factors underlying TEIQue-ASF, i.e. Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotionality, and Sociability.

Reading comprehension test

To assess the subjects' reading comprehension ability prior to the experiment, researchers (one of whom was the instructor of the class) built and administered a reading comprehension test comprised of 30 items. The reading test included six passages, each followed by a few items assessing reading ability in various forms, for example, multiple choice, short answer, and true/false. The students scored 1 point for each correct answer. A pilot test on 42 intermediate learners yielded the reliability (Cronbach's α) of 0.86. The criterion-related validity using learners' reading scores of previous term as the criterion was 0.62. In addition, the test gained professional-judgment-based content validity (from a group of 5 colleagues).

2.3 Procedures

Learners went through the eight-week treatment. Participants had about ten hours of English per week - three hours for reading activities, and seven hours for speaking, listening and writing. In addition to their regular institution's classes, they had 6 extra tutoring sessions (started from the second week of their course, each week one session) in which they were exposed to emotionalized dynamic assessment (EDA) intervention. Since in this study the focus is on reading comprehension, tasks needed to be designed in such a way so as to highlight the importance of reading stories and comprehension of meaning.

Emotionalized Dynamic Assessment (EDA)

On the basis of the hypothesis that test performance would be improved by combining a 'psychology tool' and a 'stimulus' with an assessment task (Brown, Campione, Reeves, Ferrara & Palincsar, 1991; Brown & Ferrara, 1985), emotionalized dynamic assessment (EDA) procedures were developed. On the whole, we administered a dynamic version of the reading test six times consecutively during the term. The first time there was no intervention after the test which helped the instructor to have an understanding of the individual's baseline performance. The test was administered five more times, with 5 different reading passages1, and after each test, we had the emotional intervention procedures, which were designed to give learners elaborated feedback about performance in the preceding section, pose guiding questions, encourage task involvement, make intrinsic motivation, regulate examinee's behavior and aimed at focusing their attention on the emotional aspects of the task. Meanwhile, the instructor gave some information about Goleman's EI framework (1995) and tried to focus the questions on characteristics of EI. Here, some reading passages, which mainly had emotional background, were provided for learners followed by some texts in which they were asked to work collaboratively or individually to find answers. A sample reading given to the EDA group is provided in appendix A. (The design of the mediation process is outlined in Figure 1).

Goleman's EI framework was used in the assessment tasks as follows:

1. **Knowing one's emotions:** to make learners aware of their emotions, there were some questions which asked learners to think about the way the character was feeling and find its cause. Then, the teacher asked learners to think about similar situations and their feelings. In this way, they improved their self-understanding. Then, they were asked to talk about different emotions and their causes.

2. **Recognizing emotions in others:** to improve learners' level of empathy, the teacher encouraged them to pay attention to the body language of characters depicted in the text. In the final stage, parts of the text which could help them gain a better understanding of others' emotions were read again.

3. **Managing one's emotions:** to help learners learn how to manage their emotions, the teacher read a part of the text where the character felt an emotion (e.g. sadness or anger) and then asked the students to find the cause of that emotion (i.e. what triggered it). Then, they were asked to read the rest of the text and

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1 Each passage was based on one the characteristics of Goleman's EI framework. For example, the passage in the appendix is for *managing one's emotion*.

find how that emotion was dealt with and how that strategy influenced their friends and people around them. When the text ended, the teacher asked the students to discuss the possible ways of managing that emotion more effectively.

4. **Handling relationships:** to make students aware of the forth characteristics of Goleman's theory, learners were invited to read the parts of the text which showed interactions between characters again. Then, they were asked to think about themselves in characters' positions and to say what their friends would have done to make them feel better?

5. **Motivating oneself:** to raise learners' level of self-motivation, some parts of the text that characters experienced a positive feeling were read again and they were asked to talk about the ways characters could change their negative feelings to positive ones. Subsequently, participants were asked to think about their feelings in the classroom, what they wanted to accomplish and the good reasons they had for learning the language.

Assessment	Task description	EDA mediation
Test 1: Pretest	1.Reading a text in L2; 2.Independent completion of test items	DA mediation
Test 2: DA1	1.Reading a text in L2; 2. Independent completion of test items; 3.Answering the same questions after mediation	None
Test3: DA2	1.Reading a text in L2; 2. Independent completion of test items; 3.Revising the same questions after mediation	Providing explicit and implicit feedback and posing guiding questions to help learners find the correct answer
Test4: DA3	1.Reading a text in L2; 2. Independent completion of test items; 3. Revising the same questions after mediation	Providing explicit and implicit feedback and posing guiding questions to help learners find the correct answer
Test5:DA4	1.Reading a text in L2; 2. Independent completion of test items; 3. Revising the same questions after mediation	Providing explicit and implicit feedback and posing guiding questions to help learners find the correct answer
Test6: DA5	1.Reading a text in L2; 2. Independent completion of test items; 3. Revising the same questions after mediation	Providing explicit and implicit feedback and posing guiding questions to help learners find the correct answer

Figure 1. Mediation design

Reading comprehension tasks and evaluation criteria

First, learners were asked to read the text. The maximum length of each text was 350 words. The word-limitation assured us that learners were able to read the whole text and they could recall the text. The reading test and tasks were modeled after other widely available standardized tests of reading (e.g. TOEFL), and they consisted of texts of one to three paragraphs in length followed by multiple-choice comprehension items. Subjects were told that their teacher would give them support and feedback whenever they required.

3. Results

The qualitative analysis of the mediational intervention (which is the focus of this study) is grounded in

Vygotsky's argument on the relationship between assessment and development in ZPD. Vygotsky argued that while working within the ZPD, the focus should be on the interpretation of learners' abilities and not on their measurement, i.e. the examiner should " penetrate into the internal causal-dynamic and genetic connections that determine the process itself of mental development" (Vygotsky, 1987, p.203).

To that end, a grounded analysis of every session was conducted to find interactions that demonstrated signs of reading development. From the analyses emerged typologies of mediations that were used and specifically mediations that best nurtured the development of reading achievement. In addition, short illustrative extracts from the assessments are provided.

As said before, learners went through mediation processes. During the mediation process, participants read the text twice and they were offered mediation in the form of some questions, feedback, hints and prompts. Since instruction and assessment are inseparable in a DA approach, some information about word meaning and different reading strategies were provided whenever it was required.

While learners were reading the texts, the teacher focused on their reading sub-skills such as their ability to identify the main idea of the passage, to use context clues to guess unfamiliar words, to recognize content-related vocabulary, identify and use key words to increase understanding of the passage, etc. Then, during mediational activities, she tried to teach them how to use reading strategies to better accomplish the reading task.

Given that some questions had multiple-choice format, we predicted that learners sometimes guess the correct answer or reached it applying test-taking strategies rather than reach the answer through text comprehension. So, occasionally after providing the answer (whether the choice was correct or incorrect), they were asked to give reasons for choosing such answer.

3.1 Mediation Typology

An important feature of this study is that the mediation offered to learners is not pre-specified and the mediator let the mediation emerge from her collaborations with learners. Finally, a mediation typology, arranged from the most implicit to the most explicit, was developed (see Figure 2)

1. Accepting response
2. Rereading the question and the relevant segment of the passage related to that emotion.
3. Asking the learner to think about similar situations.
4. Encouraging the learner to give personal responses to questions (if possible).
5. Asking the words (especially emotional ones).
6. Identifying the problem area and then specifying error.
7. Providing metalinguistic clues
8. Requesting for re-answering the question.
9. Offering a choice
10. Translation
11. Providing the correct response
12. Providing an explicit explanation and re-narrating the experience.
13. Reviewing Goleman's EI framework.

Figure 2. Mediation Typology for EDA group

The typology presented in Figure 2 can be classified into seven major categories: managing the interactions; redirecting learners' focus on emotional aspects; helping the learners to reconsider their answer; helping the learners to overcome the problem; enhancing reading comprehension; promoting L2 development and promoting learners' knowledge about emotional characteristics.

The first strategy is Accepting response, which falls with the first category, i.e. managing the mediator-learner interactions along with the other approach, i.e. Rereading the question and the relevant segment of the passage.

Asking the learner to think about similar situations and Encouraging the learner to give personal responses to questions are approaches used to redirect learners' focus on emotional aspects. These dual-focus mediation approaches were intended to develop both learners' reading comprehension and their emotional intelligence through engaging them in talking about their emotional experiences. Asking the words, Identifying the problem area and then specifying error, providing metalinguistic clues and Requesting for re-answering the question were used to encourage learners to reconsider their response based on the identified problem.

Providing the correct response, which fall in the enhancing reading comprehension category, follows the learners' failure in finding the correct response and is less explicit than Providing an explicit explanation and re-narrating the experience which is intended to advance learner's reading development by addressing specific problem areas in accordance with DA principles. Finally, Reviewing Goleman's EI framework was intended to promote learners' knowledge about emotional characteristics and was followed by some discussion of the character's emotional experience.

In should be pointed out that the mediations were tightly interrelated and most often we had more than one mediation in the interaction. Here, some mediational interactions provided for the EDA group are transcribed. In this stage, we have prepared some examples based on the characteristics of Goleman's EI and mediations are randomly presented rather than in implicit to explicit order.

Recognizing emotions in others and managing one's emotions

Prior to giving the reading passage to learners, the instructor provided them with a short description of how one can control his/her feelings and manage emotions (managing one's emotions). She explained how people use their voices, their body and their faces to convey their feelings. Further, she elaborated on how the recognition of other's emotion is important in maintaining relationship with them. She exemplified that when a person is displaying a sad facial expression, she/he may have experienced some kind of loss and be in need of social support (recognizing emotions in others). This extract is designed to enable learners to foster a better understanding of their (and others') emotions and help them manage their emotions. Students have just finished reading the passage. Three learners and the instructor took part in the conversation. Arina, one of the students, started talking about the story. The talk then turned to a discussion of emotional states of characters and learners' experiences of similar circumstances, induced by the instructor:

Extract 1

1. M: Tell me more about the characters of the story?
2. A: there was a father and a son.
3. M: Ok, continue. I haven't read the story. Tell me more.
4. A: well, it was the son's graduation party and he ---thought his father buys a car for him ↑ but ↓--his father bought a Bible. He, -he became angry and leaved- no, left his father.
5. M: Ok, Arina. Let me ask you a question. (she turned to other students) Everybody, think about this question: what would you do if you were instead of that young man?
6. A: I become angry but I do not leave the house.
7. M: Why do you become angry?
8. A: because, --Because I was waiting for a car.
9. M: Arina, think about your father.
10. A: (quickly) No, no—I won't become angry with my father↑ but I was waiting for a car ↓.
11. M: uhuh. What about others (turning to other students)
12. N: I don't become angry. But I would just say thank you (she made a gesture of disappointment).
13. M: Well- now it is better. What about you Pani?
14. P: I ask him.
15. M: What would you tell him?
16. P: I wanted a car, daddy. Where is my car? ↓
17. M: I liked it. Be frank with your father-ask him. It gives both of you a better feeling. Put yourself in your father's shoes then decide what the best reaction to show is. Thanks everyone. Let's go to the rest of the story.

To fully understand oneself and others, learners should be aware of their emotions and should understand triggers of emotions. In this extract, it is the mediator who initiates the discussion and asks one of the learners (Arina) to narrate the story. In order to encourage her to give further information, the mediator pretends that she is unaware of the story and seeks further information from her (turn 3). In the following turn (5), the mediator,

going round the class, encourages the learners to think about the character's feeling and think about similar situations. Then, students start talking about their feelings while the mediator is trying to teach them how to manage their emotions and at the same time handle their relationships. By asking them to think about the young man and put themselves in his shoes, she tries to teach them that it is better to understand one's own feelings (self-awareness) and practice managing our emotions to become ready for interaction with others.   In line 8, the mediator tries to teach them how to recognize emotions in others. In turn 10, Arina shows that she is concerned about her father's feeling (I won't become angry with my father), while simultaneously she appears to be aware of her own feelings (but I was waiting for a car). Negin's statement (turn 12) shows that she is able to manage her emotions and is considerate of others' feelings. This is an instance of Encouraging the learner to give personal responses to questions. Pani (turns 14-16) uses a better strategy- by asking her father about the car and being frank with him she satisfies her own feelings as well as her father's. Consequently, mediator's statements in turn 17 aim to encourage them change the emotional lens of anger to a sympathetic reaction in such challenging situation. In addition, we can see some cases of approval of learners' responses or accepting response in lines 13 and 17.

The following extract took immediately after extract 1. In this extract, which is for the EDA group, Maryam (the student) had completed answering the items. The mediator (M) was asking some questions about her (L2) performance, and then stopped to comment on her answers.

Extract 2

1. M: I just want to ask you to think about the answer of the second question once more
2. L2: Storm doesn't mean shout?↑
3. M: well --, what do you think? Did you choose it because of 'raised his voice'?
4. L2: Mhm. (she thinks).
5. M: What do you do when you are angry?
6. L2:I --shout, mhm (searching for a word) -- shout↓ (she reads the text once more) no, is it make furious?↓
7. M: What does furious mean Maryam?
8. L2: angry↑.
9. M: yeah. But, make furious? Did he make someone furious?
10. L2: No, no, no. -- (she thinks). Does it move angrily?
11. M: Mhm. What about choice D?
12. L2: Making delighted?↑ no, it is not correct.
13. M: Why?
14. L2: --Delighted means something like--happy ---. But he was -- angry.
15. M: Yep, that's it. Excellent.

When Maryam finished reading the text and the questions, the mediator asked her to go to one of the questions, for which she had chosen the incorrect answer (Request for re-answering the question). By prompting her to have another attempt, she indirectly informed her that the answer was not correct. It should be mentioned that in these interactions most often a 'second attempt' was offered rather than saying directly that the answer was correct (in case there was the probability of guessing) or wrong. Maryam showed her uncertainty by asking ' Storm doesn't mean shout?' (turn 2). The mediator knowing that the previous sentence had misguided the student, asked her to think more (turn 3). Her next response (make furious) and the following turns (6-8) provided evidence that she had understood the text, but was not familiar with the exact meaning of the term and tried to guess the meaning from the context. The mediational strategy used by the mediator to help the learner was Asking the words. After providing the correct response (turn 10), the mediator asked her to think about the last option to make sure that she was familiar with the meaning of the` term delighted (offering a choice). Maryam's response in turn 14 made the mediator sure that she knew the meaning.

Knowing one's emotions

Prior to giving the reading passage to learners, the instructor talked about the importance of understanding the causes of emotions in oneself and understanding how emotions progress and transform over time. She further engaged them in a number of activities in which some situations were introduced and learners were asked to elicit particular emotions. The following extract is designed to enable learners to better recognize their emotions. Here, learners and the mediator had already been through two test items and consequently a social-interactive

frame had already been established between the mediator and learners and for the test as a whole:

Extract 3

1. M: Ok, Pani. Let me see your answers.
2. P: I couldn't find the answer of the third question.
3. M: Okay. What is your best guess?
4. P: --------(silence)
5. M: Let's read it. His -------------- mother is always **worrying** that something terrible will happen to him.
6. M: What are the extra words?
7. P: sibling, ---Tongue-tied and Mhm nervous
8. M: Let's check the words in the passage.
9. M: (pointing to the text)-I get **nervous** speaking to people and become **tongue tied** then I say sentences in reverse.
10. M: When people first meet us they put us as "the hot **siblings**", but then they come to know that we differ in so many ways.
11. P: It is not sibling↑.
12. M: Excellent. So, we have tongue-tied and nervous.
13. P: Mhm--(she thinks). It is nervous↓.
14. M: Exactly. Why not tongue-tied?
15. P: It means zæboonesh ghofl shode.
16. M: Can you use nervous in a sentence?
17. P: Mhm--(she thinks). I was nervous finding the answer.
18. M: You were nervous about finding the answer (she smiles).
19. M: How do you feel when you are nervous?
20. P: Mhm------(silence)
21. M: Let's ask your friends. (*turning to other students*). How do you feel when you are nervous?
22. A: Teacher. What you mean?
23. M: How do you understand that you are nervous? What do you call nervousness?
24. A: It is ----It is like anxiety.
25. P: Yes, you feel uneasy.
26. M: very good. What else?
27. S: you cannot control your feelings and ---(seems she is looking for a word) you cannot do anything.
28. Excellent. You have rapid heartbeat or you may have difficulty concentrating on something (then, she whispers tamarkoz)

To better recognize one's emotions, the person should have the ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment as they happen. People good at this characteristic make personal decisions with certainty and assurance. In this extract, it was the mediator who initiates the discussion and checked the answers provided by one of the learners (Pani). Pani was unresponsive to the first question posed by the mediator. The mediator reread the question and the relevant segment of the passage (line 5). In line 6, the mediator offered choices by drawing attention to extra words (sibling, tong-tied and nervous), thus, she gave Pani some choices to answer the question. In turn 13, the learner provided the correct response but to check that she was not guessing it, the mediator asked the reason for such choice. Then, she encouraged the student to give personal answer by using the word nervous in a sentence. In the following turns, the mediator tried to talk about this emotional state and help learners know that emotion.

Handling relationships

In this stage, the mediator gave some information about the forth characteristic of Goleman's EI framework, i.e. handling relationships. She mentioned that the ability to appropriately express and validate emotions was essential in maintaining close personal relationships in a nourishing and constructive manner. She further added that using expressions such as: "How are you feeling?", "How are you doing?", "I love you," "I appreciate you," "I'm glad we're spending this time together," "You're very important in my life," "I'm sorry" help people improve their relationships.

The following extract occurred about half-way through the EDA program. After finishing the reading passage, the instructor asked learners to take part in a discussion about the passage.

Extract 4

1. M: okay everybody. Let's talk about the story. Nadia, please start.
2. N: It was about a girl who is 13 or 14 years old.
3. M: Uhuh. Continue. Let's call her Susan.
4. N: She lost her friend and then she tried to find her↓ (she stops talking).
5. M: Ok. Go on.
6. N: She sent an email to her and her friend replied. Then, they met each other.

7.   M: (laughs) it was such a very good brief summary. Sahar, what was the reason for their separation.
8.   S: Mhm. I think she was angry with her friend and she couldn't talk to her.
9.   M: Why?
10.   S: because (looking at the passage) because she was afraid of losing her friend
11.   M: Do you think she did the right thing?
12.   S: No, because she lost her finally.
13.   M: What would you do if you were in her position?
14.   S: I don't know. ---I would tell her the problem.
15.   M: Very good. How many close friends do you have?
16.   S: Close friends? 3 or 4.
17.   M: What do you do when you are angry with one of them?
18.   S: I think ----it is good to tell her.

It is worth mentioning that handling relationships and recognizing emotions in others are comparable to Gardner's interpersonal intelligence. To be good at handling relationships, or to have high social competence, one has to learn to be a warm, caring and emphatic human being who can make worthwhile personal relationships with others. In this intervention, the mediator tried to engage learners in talking about the story and at the same time she encouraged them to tell what they would do if they were in the position of the character. As can be seen in the second turn, the mediator's focus was more on narrating the emotional experience rather than looking for exact details (the girl is not 13 or 14 years old, the story happened 13-14 years ago).

Motivating oneself

To raise the level of self-motivation, participants had to think about the positive feelings the characters of the stories had and the way they could change their negative feelings. Subsequently, participants were asked to think about what they want to accomplish and the good reasons they had for learning the language. The following extract occurred immediately after the student (Negar) had completed answering the items. The mediator (M) was asking some questions about the learner's (L2) performance, and then stopped to talk about the story and the emotion experienced by the character.

Extract 5

1.   M: Have you ever seen Charles Chaplin's movies?
2.   N: Yes and I enjoyed them.
3.   M: Uhuh. Very good. Now what is your opinion about his life?
4.   N: Well ---- (she thinks). He had a very hard life.
5.   M: Is his life the same as his parents?
6.   N: No, no.
7.   M: Okay. Keep going. How did his life differ from his parents?
8.   N: They were poor but he could become rich.
9.   M: Very good. Thanks. Now, Arina continues.
10.   A: He could become a good comedian and his parents failed.
11.   M: Now everybody. (Turning to other students). Could he become successful from the first day?
12.   P: No, he first ----(she thinks and then reads from the passage) He was not an instant success. His attempts to copy other slapstick comedians who were popular at that time were a failure.
13.   M: Very good. As you see he was determined to succeed and his failure did not stop him.

Then, some general questions about their experiments in learning a second language were posed to make them aware that some difficulties are shared among all students and prepare them to tackle such difficulties:

1. Make some brief notes of your typical thoughts and feelings when you have to learn something you think you cannot do.

2. How do you respond when learning is difficult and you have to do it?

3. How do you respond when learning is difficult and you don't have to do it?

The interesting point about subjects was their enthusiasm and interest in performing the reading comprehension activities and attempts to find the meaning of other emotional words. In addition, they were all ready to discuss the passage and its content after doing the reading activities. As one of the learners named Sahar commented on her experience of having learning support and said:

S: I had a very, very good feeling.

M: Tell me why you had such feeling.

S: You know, it is like as if I can go and have an exam without being anxious anymore. I mean,-- I don't say that I will answer all questions but I'm sure that I will remember all the things I've been through and negative emotions will not hamper my performance.

4. Conclusion

This study provided a qualitative analysis of the mediator and learners cooperative dialogues and tracked their developmental changes by categorizing mediational strategies provided. The mediational strategies were organized by their functions, i.e. managing the interactions; redirecting learners' focus on emotional aspects; helping the learners to reconsider their answer; helping the learners to overcome the problem; enhancing reading comprehension; promoting L2 development and promoting learners' knowledge about emotional characteristics. Our qualitative analysis showed that learners' responses were both regressive and progressive, in which progressive moves outweighed the regressive ones especially through the final sessions. In this regard, the development of learners' reading ability conforms to Vygotsky's idea in that it "includes not just evolutionary but also revolutionary changes, regressions, gaps, zigzags, and conflicts" (Vygotsky, 1997, p.221). This part of study runs in accordance with previous attempts (Ableeva, 2010; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Poehner, 2005) in that the development of reading comprehension was anything but linear. In addition, the improvement observed in the final sessions showed that the zone of proximal development was transforming to the zone of actual development.

Our findings added a new dimension to the available empirical literature (e.g. Ableeva, 2010; Lantolf & Pohner, 2004) on the applicability of dynamic assessment to second language performance in general and second language reading (e.g. Cioffi & Carney, 1983; Guterman, 2002) in particular. Despite repeated reference to the effect of emotion in learning (Petrides et al., 2004) and more specifically second language learning (Abdolrezapour & Tavakoli, 2012; Dewaele, 2008) and in one's ZPD (Holzman, 2009), previous attempts on using dynamic assessment paid little attention to the emotional states of learners and the possibility of integrating it to DA procedures. In this regard, our findings lay a path between emotion, cognition and assessing learner's performance and establish a solid basis for the integration of emotional intelligence within teaching and assessment tasks and using them to improve one's performance.

4.1 Implications

From the perspective of language pedagogy the findings of this study assume particular importance in that they provide empirical support for the use of dynamic assessment and emotional intelligence in language classrooms. The DA procedures used in the present study has the potential to inform EFL reading comprehension pedagogy. Understanding the state of a student's L2 reading comprehension ability can be an extremely important factor in adopting appropriate reading strategies to teach and develop. With this knowledge, teachers can guide and possibly accelerate students through development of enhanced L2 reading strategies and skills. In addition, they can consider creating emotionally safe learning environments where students can take risks, develop confidence, and grow emotionally and academically.

In addition, the findings of this study help teachers to understand how learners' emotions affect learning and to understand the need to make judgments about when emotions are interfering with or supporting learning. They can involve the five characteristics of "emotional intelligence" in their teaching process and make an attempt to help themselves and their students to become aware of their emotions and try to overcome emotional barriers in the classroom. As learners learn in collaboration with their peers and their instructor, it is reasonable to claim that their emotions can impede or facilitate their learning and academic achievement.

Emotions can also influence teacher's decision making with regard to tasks and topics chosen. As it is generally acknowledged, teachers' work includes dealing with students' affective, as well as cognitive, response to the subject matter being taught and they should predict students' emotional response to specific topics and tasks. They know that boredom and anxiety are the main causes of lack of progress in the second language context. Thus, creating a positive and stimulating learning environment and applying interesting activities and tasks to engage learners and enhance their motivation is of vital importance for applied linguists, researchers and practitioners.

There were some limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed with respect to the present study. First, about the exact amount and type of intervention; one may object to the reliability of the study as the type, intensity and frequency of intervention provided for might be more than what learners needed. In order to address this issue, the examiner tried to limit her intervention to what is actually needed for learners to achieve improved performance, but it still remains a challenge for the outcomes of the study. Secondly, about the transfer of these results to learners' long-term gains in performance- in order to tackle this objection, there was a need for both static and dynamic assessments as well as other sources of information rather than gauging achievement on a number of limited tests.

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Appendix A

Reading Passage

The reading passage that you are about to read is about a young man and his father. Read the text and answer the following questions.

A Young man was getting ready to graduate college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible. Angrily, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the holy book.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart.

He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he read those words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words…PAID IN FULL.

(From http://www.alonelylife.com/thread-emotional-stories?page=2)

Now, it is time to answer the following questions about the text you just read.

1. Which of the following sentences is true about the first paragraph?
2. His father couldn't afford buying the car.
3. The young man was a college graduate.
4. His father gave the gift in the graduation party.
5. His father gave him the car.
6. The term "storm" in line 9 is closest in meaning to
7. Shout
8. Make furious
9. Move angrily
10. Become delighted
11. How was he informed about his father's death?
12. He went to his house.
13. He received a telegram.
14. Someone called him.
15. None of the above.
16. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?
17. Do not judge soon.
18. You will get whatever you want.
19. Pay attention to your parents more.
20. The car did not worth making his father sad.