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Tracing an EFL Teacher and Learners' Cognitive and Emotional Development Using Dialogic Mediation: A Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of mediation on the development of a novice teacher and in turn the effect of transformation of the teacher on the behaviors and emotions of the learners using Vygotskian sociocultural view of learning. For this purpose, a novice teacher teaching the general English course at an Iranian university was selected. To develop an understanding of the instructional setting and to diagnose her weaknesses and strengths, she was observed by a teacher educator during the first five sessions. Different instruments and tools like the teacher and students' narratives, stimulated recall of voice-recorded actual teaching, and observation were also used during the study to trace the teacher's cognitive and emotional development. As most of her practices displayed over-reliance on translation and deductive teaching of grammar, and her oral narration showed instances of cognitive/emotional dissonance, strategic mediations, both implicit and explicit, based on her needs were offered after the fifth session in a face-to-face interaction to help her develop gradually. Analysis of the results showed the gradual development of her and the positive attitudes and active engagement of the learners during she was being mediated. Implications of the findings are presented and discussed.

Keywords: Sociocultural theory; teacher education; mediation; novice teacher learning; teacher emotion

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1. Introduction

Teacher educators from all over the world use different methods and approaches to prepare L2 teachers for their work. Traditionally, educators tended to use approaches which were rooted in positivism in which they transmitted their knowledge to novice teachers and novice teachers, in turn, were required to imitate what they were told (Johnson, 2009). Expert teachers were the primary source of inputs and novice teachers were containers to be filled in. Even expert teachers did not have autonomy in selecting the materials and had to do what curriculum developers told them. Agency and autonomy of teachers were also completely ignored in this perspective and there was no role for creativity and teachers' improvisation.

However, today it is argued that teacher learning is so dynamic and unpredictable that teachers cannot use one approach for all (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The sociocultural (SCT) perspective considers this issue in that it suggests that each individual has his/her own way of learning and potential (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Actually, human learning is defined as a social activity with its goals that is situated in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1998) proposed the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) as "the optimum time for teaching both the group and each individual"(p. 204).

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Vygotsky (1978) believed that analysis of development must be genetic and historical, because, by doing this, teachers can trace the processes of cognitive and emotional development from its beginning more systematically, and can seek its origin and cause. According to him, the processes must be studied as they are changing and being shaped by other factors like environment and culture.

Johnson and Golombek (2016) suggest that teacher educators try to explicitly and intentionally insert new tools and signs into the teacher education activities with the goal of qualitative transformation of not only what the teachers think but also what they do in the class. Therefore, less competent peers reach better performance by the help of scaffolding. The concept of scaffolding was first introduced by Wood, Burner, and Ross (1976) to suggest that more experienced peers can help less experienced ones develop their cognitive ability. Other scholars like Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) and Donato (2004) introduced the concept of dialogic interaction to argue that assistance should be based on the learners' needs and sensitive to the moment-to-moment of interactions in culturally-mediated contexts and should be removed gradually as learners reach independence. The most important tool is the scientific concept which is systematic, abstract and generalizable. When internalized, it can be used in different contexts and activities.

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In the positivist view, body and mind were separate from each other and dichotomies like cognition-emotion and body-mind were used by its advocates (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). However, SCT suggests that there are dialectical relationships between body and mind as well as emotion and cognition (Johnson, 2009). Actually, all the factors in the environment including body, mind, emotion and cognition affect and shape each other in a dialectical manner. Teachers' emotions, hence, are important because teaching is an emotional practice (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Zembylas (2005), similarly, suggests that it is important to study the hidden emotions of teachers that form their identities, the fears, hopes, disappointments and other good and bad experiences that can change the dynamic nature of teachers' identity. By analyzing these hidden stories, teachers can self-observe and self-investigate to overcome the traumas they have.

2. Literature Review

There are some other differences between sociocultural theory and traditional approaches like formative assessment. According to Poehner and Lantolf (2005), what makes sociocultural theory different from other approaches like formative assessment is that the former looks for the future performance of the participants in more systematic manner while their ZPDs are being shaped. In fact, transfer of the abilities to new tasks is the focus of SCT. In contrast, formative assessment is generally unsystematic and may either overestimate or underestimate learners' abilities and progress,

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resulting in inappropriate instruction. They also suggest that formative assessments seeks to achieve what has been prescribed in the curriculum, but the goal of SCT is the development and transformation of all the participants in goal-directed activities, not just achieving the curriculum goals. The aim of formative assessment, therefore, is to help the learners complete a task rather than helping them transfer their abilities to other situations, while task completion is not the same as development. Even the development in formative assessment is achieved more or less incidentally rather than intentionally.

Lantolf and Poehner (2014) suggest that human cognition is inherently social in that it emerges out of participation in different social interactions. Similarly, Lantolf and Poehner (2008, p.180) propose that "language learning is physical as well as cognitive, individual and social, multisensory and situated in the activity". Golombek and Johnson (2004), in the same way, propose that emotion and feelings of the teachers have important roles in shaping their practices. Therefore, learning is not just about changes in the brain but consists of whole-body learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008) including brain, mind, emotion and cognition. This process is situated in context in that all of these affect each other. Also, the transformation of both the teachers from external (interpsychological) to internal (intrapsychological) is not direct but mediated (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Moreover, the transformation does not happen

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automatically or independently, but happens in sustained participation in goal-directed social activities.

There are different methods to elicit information from novice teachers in order to investigate their cognitive and emotional processes like asking them to narrate orally what they do and feel (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). These methods allow us to trace their thought processes step-by-step and to have microgenetic analysis of their progress.

According to Johnson (2009), narration helps expert teachers reach internal thoughts of less experienced ones and to mediate their development. Narration also helps teachers to know themselves better and change both their practices and their feelings. By using narration, teachers also interpret their actions and can change them accordingly. It should be noted that these accounts are not objective, but subjective and interpretive in that there are different interpretations of the same phenomena by different teachers (Bruner, 1996; Sarbin, 1986).

By using narratives, therefore, teachers reconstruct their past performance and gain a better picture of what, why and how they have done something in their practice (Polkinghorne, 1988). Teachers can self-observe their behaviors by narrating what they have done in the past and what they will do in the future and can be their own mediators (Doyle, 1997; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). Therefore, teacher educators should be always responsive to the emotions of novice teachers, in a way to support their development

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instead of letting cognitive/emotional dissonance underestimate teachers' ability.

There are many studies related to teacher education which are based on Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Garcia, 2019; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Johnson & Worden, 2014). As an example, in a study by Johnson (2015), four novice teachers were scaffolded during their teaching. First, they were asked to teach the lesson. The teacher educator video recorded the lesson and the teachers discussed what happened during their practice. They were also asked to write reflection papers about their experience and development. Analysis of the results showed that they had problems in how to teach some concepts and they all admitted that their knowledge was based on everyday concepts. However, after they were mediated, they developed a new understanding of the concepts.

Most of the studies have just worked on teachers' learning and have not investigated the effect of teachers' learning on learners' thoughts and behaviors and how teachers' learning changes the way learners learn in the classroom (e.g., Golombek & Doran, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Johnson & Worden, 2014). Questions that need to be examined more thoroughly at least in Iran are how the emotions and thought processes of the teachers affect their actions and whether teacher educators could

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intervene in these processes and transform them and also to see whether the changes in the teachers' actions can affect the learners' engagement or not.

Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by presenting an in-depth interaction between the teacher educator and a novice teacher. The effect of the teacher's transformation on learners' actions in the class was investigated too. The learners' emotions and thought processes were also analyzed during the study. The results, therefore, could show the significant role teachers play in how students feel, act and think during the classroom. As second language teacher education (SLTE) programs in Iran generally use traditional approaches to educate teachers (e.g, Rashidi & Forutan, 2015; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2017), this study can offer systematic tools like strategic mediation to improve their practices based on the results of the study.

As this study is based on the SCT and traces the teacher and learners' development step-by-step, it also allows the researchers to reach detailed understanding of the student teachers and learners' cognitive and emotional processes and to trace their development by using emic analysis.

Thus, this study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How are the novice teacher's practices and emotions before the mediation?

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2. How are the novice teacher's practices and emotions transformed during the mediation?

3. What are the effects of the novice teacher's practices on the students' actions and emotions before mediation and while the teacher is being mediated?

3. Method

3.1. Participants and sampling

One university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher with an MA degree in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) participated in this study. She was a novice teacher with no experience of teaching. She was selected based on criterion sampling which is the years she has taught English. The reason that only one teacher participated in this study was that the aim of the study was to present an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of complex issues like the teacher's cognition and emotions, because teacher development according to Johnson and Golombek (2011) is highly individualized.

Her intact general English class with 40 students participated in this study too. She was chosen because the researcher wanted to know how her internal world and meanings were by detailed and microgenetic analysis of her cognitive and emotional processes.

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The mediator who was also one of the researchers, is a PhD candidate of TEFL who has taught English for 7 years. He has worked on similar studies related to the SCT and its subcomponents like dynamic assessment.

3.2. Instruments

As the effect of mediation on one teacher and the effect of the teacher's learning on the students' practices were investigated in this study, the researcher participated in this study as both an observer and a mediator. In fact, the researcher remained a nonparticipant observer while he was observing the class in the first five sessions. Then, he offered his hints to the teacher after the fifth session.

3.3. Data collection

During 20 sessions for the novice teacher's class in one semester, the researchers investigated the effect of mediation on the teacher's emotions, cognitions and practices and also the effect of teacher's learning on the students' practices and emotions. Different instruments like observation, stimulated recall, and specifically narrations were used during the study to get the insider meaning and subjective opinions, feelings and experiences of the novice teacher and the students (Johnson, 2009).

To observe the teacher's thought processes, at the end of each session, she was asked to narrate orally what she had felt and done during

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each session. She was also observed during her practice as a supplementary tool to get a full picture of her behaviors. Students' behaviors during the class were also observed in each session and they were asked to write a narration after each session to analyze their opinions and feelings about their teacher's practice. As the narrations were in Persian, their native language, and the researchers translated them into English, another reviewer who was a PhD candidate of TEFL translated 20 percent of the data into English to check the adequacy of the translated narration by the researchers of the study. The findings showed high agreement between them.

After the fifth session, the mediator intervened and offered his hints to the teacher based on her weaknesses. All the interactions were face-to-face, based on her problems in teaching. The mediations used in this study were based on interactionist models of sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). As the teacher's problems and immediate needs were different in each session and her responsiveness varied, a pre-made scale was not chosen to offer the hints, but the strategic mediations, sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit, were used in the study.

Actually, the interactions between the researcher and the teacher were recorded and transcribed. Therefore, microgenetic analysis of all her behaviors was conducted to truly understand her thought processes.

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Her voice in each session was also recorded for the stimulated recall session. The mediator paused the tape whenever he found weaknesses in her practice and offered the hints based on the problems.

3.4. Data analysis

Microgenetic analysis of all the interactions was conducted to get deeper understanding of the participants' internal worlds and feelings. According to Wertsch (1985, p. 55), microgenesis is a ''very short-term longitudinal study'' which can help us diagnose step-by-step development of teachers. Microgenetic analysis also helps us analyze the quantity and quality of hints offered to teachers and understand whether their responsiveness differs or not.

Therefore, the narrations, stimulated recall of voice-recorded actual teaching and observations were analyzed to find relationships between them and to see whether larger patterns of meaning would be revealed or not because this made the participants' implicit beliefs, emotions and understanding explicit (Shore, 1996). Actually, the researchers relied on narrative, words and even body movements to describe and analyze the setting, behavior and the interactions between the participants. For example, as the mediator was looking for cognitive/emotional dissonance of the teacher, words in her narrations and behavioral patterns that seemed to appear regularly like the words 'stress, sad, lack of confidence' and body movements like shaking hands were looked for to identify the dissonance

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and help the teacher overcome it. Therefore, data were analyzed by providing rich descriptions and plausible explanations of the findings. Actually, the qualitative analysis was based on identification of the kind and quality of hints the teacher received and her responsiveness to them (Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013).

To control the researchers' bias and enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, another PhD candidate of TEFL participated in this study too. She was given part of the data as well as the researchers' interpretations randomly and was asked to give her interpretations and to point out biases. The researcher also wrote a complete thick description of the setting including who, when, why and what was done to help the readers see and experience the participants' cognitive and emotional world. The use of multiple sources for data collection like narration, observation, use of low-inference descriptors like direct quotes and stimulated recall also enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The researcher also asked the novice teacher to read some of the interpretations randomly and to comment on them to see whether she agreed with what was said about her thoughts, experiences and feelings or not. To address the transferability issue as in other qualitative studies, the researcher provided rich and detailed description of the contexts so that different readers can compare the similarities and differences in each context. As this study was a qualitative one and the objective of the study was the change

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and development in participants' behaviors, the issue of dependability (reliability) was viewed as the possibility of tracking or explaining the changes that occurred in the behaviors of the participants. So by showing the appropriateness of the methods and the approaches used in the study, the researcher enhanced the dependability issue as in other qualitative studies.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Analyzing the Novice Teacher's Narrations before the Mediation

To answer the first research question, the novice teacher was just observed during the first five sessions. She was also asked to narrate orally her feelings and thought processes. Some of the narrations are presented below. T stands for the teacher.

Excerpt 1: Feeling stressful

> **T:** It was the day before I was supposed to teach at the university. I was really stressed and couldn't sleep at night at all. Before entering the classroom, I was sweating a lot. At that moment I wondered whether this only happens to me or not! After five minutes I decided to talk to the learners. It was my first experience in teaching, but as I had many lectures when I was a university student, I overcame my stress to some extent. I started talking to the students for one hour and talked about why they should learn English and

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> why it is necessary to develop their knowledge. Today I understood that teaching is really unpredictable for me!

She talked about the stresses and strains of teaching for the first time. As she was observed by the researcher, it was evident that she was sweating and her hands were shaking a little. However, she could deal with it gradually and started talking to the students after five minutes. The reason she could manage her stress level more easily, was that she had many lectures when she was a university student.

Even her experience as a learner (called apprenticeship of observation by Lortie, 1975) helped her manage the first session better as one of her teachers had built a good rapport with the students when she was once a student. So, by asking the students to talk about their backgrounds and cities, she made a friendly atmosphere. Actually, apprenticeship of observation is made up of everyday concepts that were shaped when teachers were once learners. However, it is needed to change these everyday concepts into scientific ones to help novice teachers transform their practice (Johnson & Worden, 2014).

Excerpt 2: Unable to merge theories with practice

> **T:** The Session started with vocabulary. I read the words one by one and I translated them into Persian. The second part of the lesson was reading which was about using a dictionary. I

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> read the whole passage and after that I asked the learners whether they had any problems or not. Most of them asked unfamiliar words and I translated all of them. That session, I also taught grammar which was about modals. I explained the rules in Persian and gave the learners some examples which was not in the book.

Before entering the classroom, novice teachers think that a student-centered class with active engagement of the learners is what happens during their practice. However, when they start teaching, they realize the difficulties of achieving it (Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013). Based on what she narrated and the observation of her by the researcher in the first five sessions, it was evident that the novice teacher used traditional approaches in teaching English as a foreign language. Although the teacher had an MA degree in TEFL, most of the techniques she used, like over-reliance on translation and teaching grammar explicitly, were adopted from Grammar Translation Method. She even did not speak in English at all during her teaching practice.

Therefore, it was evident that she could not use her knowledge of second language teaching theories and methods in her real-life practice. Mediation and help was needed to help her integrate her every day and scientific concepts and to help her conduct all of them in her everyday practice, rather than memorizing the methods.

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Excerpt 3: Teacher-centered teaching

> **T:** This session, I was supposed to teach some prefixes. There were about 30 prefixes in one page. I read all of them one by one and translated them into Persian. Some examples were also given in the book but as I did not check them before, I could not give other examples for most of the prefixes.

One of the problems with her teaching was that she had not studied the book before entering the classroom. Therefore, she was not quite ready to use other examples for the prefixes. As there were about 30 prefixes in one lesson, more examples were needed to help learners better learn them. After the observation, the researcher noticed that the novice teacher had taught the lesson so fast, because she finished one of the units in one session and started teaching the next one. The other problem with her was that the learners had almost no role in the class and they were just listeners. Mediation was needed to help this teacher move from teacher-centered to student-centered way of teaching.

4.2. Analyzing the Novice Teacher's Narrations during the Mediation

To answer the second research question and to see the effect of the mediation on the novice teacher's practice and feelings, she was mediated

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by the researcher after the fifth to the last session. As Lantolf (2000) argues, "novices do not merely copy experts' capabilities; rather they transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it" (p. 17).

The good part about her teaching was that she was paying attention to the feelings and emotions of the learners. However, as mentioned in the previous part, the observations in the first five sessions showed that she often used traditional techniques such as translation in her teaching. This showed the discrepancy between knowledge of theories she had learned as a graduate student (content knowledge) and her practice in real life teaching (pedagogical content knowledge).

To help her reshape her practices, first, the mediator used more implicit hints and asked her 'what other options she might have tried'. But, as she could not talk about other options, more explicit mediation was needed to help her use these theories in real life practice.

Excerpt 4: Mediational response: The way you teach is mostly based on the traditional methods. M stands for the mediator.

> **M:** First of all, what you have felt in the first session was completely normal, especially for you with no experience of teaching. Teaching at university with 40 students who have different proficiencies is difficult and causes stress for all novice teachers. As you saw, your stress level decreased in

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> each session step by step. However, most of your practices are based on traditional methods. Using translation most of the time and for every word is of no use. You just read the readings and the vocabulary part with no extra activities and teach the grammatical rules with just two or three examples that are mentioned in the book. Although the book has no writing and listening part, you can use extracurricular activities to help learners develop their skills. Although the book has some speaking questions for students, when you asked them and they did not answer the questions, you moved to the next question without giving hints to the learners.

The mediator made the weaknesses in the novice teacher's practice explicit by talking about what the teacher did in relation to different language skills and components. The problem with the teacher was that she could not adapt her actions based on what happened in the classroom. As an example, when the students could not answer the speaking questions, the teacher moved to the next without giving hints to the learners. The other weakness was that although the book did not have any writing and listening part, she could not use her creativity and improvisation to implement extracurricular activities.

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Therefore, the mediator talked about different language skills in detail. Some strategies and techniques were also given to the novice teacher to help her contextualize her actions and practices based on what happens in the classroom. Some of the excerpts are presented below.

Excerpt 5:

> **M:** You can use different strategies when teaching reading. First talk about the purpose of reading. Ask learners to identify their purpose and adjust their reading based on that purpose. Use pre-reading activities like brainstorming to activate the students' minds and background knowledge. Teach the learners how to use reading strategies like skimming, scanning, extensive reading and intensive reading based on their purposes while they are reading a text. Do not just depend on the book's exercises. Ask some questions from the learners to see whether they have comprehended the text or not.

The mediator talked about some strategies, suitable for learners, like extensive and intensive reading when teaching reading (Brown, 2007). When talking with the novice teacher, it was understood that although she knew some of these strategies, she could not implement them in real life situations. One of the reasons could be that she had just memorized the contents when she was an MA student. Some movies related to teaching

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reading by expert teachers that were prepared by the mediator were also given to her. As the mediator was also a teacher at that university, he asked her to observe his teaching to learn how to implement these strategies.

The next session the mediator worked on teaching speaking. One of the difficulties the novice teacher faced was that learners had different language proficiencies. Some of them were basic learners and a few of them were advanced learners. However, the problem with the way the teacher taught English was that when she asked some prepared questions in the book from the learners and the learners did not answer them, she moved to the next question without helping the learners start talking. Therefore, the mediator intervened again and talked about speaking skill in detail. One of the excerpts is provided.

Excerpt 6:

> **M:** First of all, pay more attention to communication and fluency rather than accuracy but do not ignore accuracy. Use some conversational routines like 'how are you today' to build rapport with learners and help learners talk. You can prepare some questions, related to the topic before entering the class to ask the learners. Maybe some students want to talk but they do not do so because they are shy. So, sometimes it is a good idea to call their names to answer the questions. You can also ask students to talk in pairs and

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> groups, sometimes in homogeneous groups consisted of learners with the same language proficiency and sometimes in heterogeneous groups consisted of learners with different language abilities. Research has shown that both are effective in different ways. For intermediate to advanced level students use activities like summary of readings, lectures and role plays.

The way she used to teach was based on traditional approaches and she mostly neglected speaking skill in her practice. Therefore, some others techniques were introduced to the novice teacher to help her continue her practice more effectively. For beginner students, it was recommended that she uses conversational routines and for intermediate to advanced learners it was suggested that she uses activities like lectures and role plays. These activities would help the students talk more because they were provided by some stimuli.

Another important point that was mentioned by the mediator was that she should sometimes call the names of the students to answer the questions, because some of the learners are shy. It was also recommended that she pays less attention to accuracy and more to fluency. The novice teacher was also asked to narrate orally about her feelings, emotions and transformation of her practices while she was mediated. Some of the narrations are provided. T stands for the teacher.

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Excerpt 7:

> **T:** Before the mediation, I used to read the readings without any other activity. Sometimes my students read it and I just translated the words they asked me. However, now I use pre-reading activities like brainstorming and talking about the topic. I read the reading paragraph by paragraph and ask the learners whether they have any problems. After finishing the reading I ask the learners to solve the comprehension check questions. I also talked about strategies like skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive reading. I also provided learners with some examples like reading newspapers and novels and how to use strategies needed to read effectively. I also introduced the book 'graded readers' to the students.

After observing the novice teacher and analyzing her narrations, it was evident that some of her practices had changed dramatically, because she implemented what she had learned from the mediator. For example, she just translated a few of the words and explained most of the words in English comparing to the first five sessions. She also used some activities like brainstorming and talking about the topic before teaching the reading. However, she forgot to ask content questions from the learners to make them talk more.

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Based on one of the oral narrations, it was discovered that she knew that she should have explained these words in English even before the mediation, but she could not use English because of lack of confidence. We can see the effect of tools like narratives and interactions in that if we had not used it, we would have erroneously concluded that she did not have this knowledge, however, it was her shyness that caused that. The next session the novice teacher talked about the teaching of speaking skill as shown in excerpt 9.

Excerpt 8:

> **T:** When my students did not answer the book's questions related to speaking, I used to move to the next one. Now, I use conversational routines like 'how is the weather today' to elicit answers from the students. Before entering the class, I observe the book to see what the topics are for teaching. Then, I generate some questions to ask the learners. In one of the sessions, I did not teach at all and put the learners in six groups. I chose three topics with counterpart arguments. For example, I gave one of the groups the topic 'what are the advantages of living in dormitory' and the other one 'what are the disadvantages of living in dormitory'. After that, I asked the learners to work in groups for 20 minutes and talk with each other about the topics. Finally, I asked the groups

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> with related topics to come to the front of the classroom and debate with each other. I did not intervene at all and let them talk with each other. The result was that they generated a lot of outputs in a serious talk and atmosphere and the subjects were hotly debated. After finishing the task, I asked them to comment on that and most of them liked it.

Her responsiveness to the mediation was good in that some of her practices were reshaped like using conversational routines in almost all the sessions. Her generated questions caused more learners to talk in the class and made them more active. Actually, the atmosphere changed from mostly Persian to mostly English.

Furthermore, the activity that she asked the learners to do in the classroom generated a lot of outputs and was fun to most of the learners. We can see that the class moved from teacher-centered to learner-centered step by step in that learners played the major role in the classroom compared to the first five sessions.

4.2.1. Stimulated recall session

As mentioned in the method section, stimulated recall was used as a supplementary tool during the study to further help the novice teacher. Actually, in five sessions stimulated recall was used to mediate the teacher. As an example while the mediator was listening to the recorded voice

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related to teaching of Roman numerals, he paused the tape. TE stands for teacher educator and N stands for novice teacher.

Excerpt 9:

> **TE:** Do you know what was wrong in this session?
>
> **N:** No.
>
> **TE:** When you were teaching Roman numeral eight you made a mistake and wrote IIX instead of VIII. One of the students told you that the latter is correct but you insisted on what you said previously. Even he came to you and showed the correct answer on his phone. Again, you said that both answers are correct because there are exceptions in Roman numerals.
>
> **N:** You are right but that moment was face threatening for me because if the students had understood that I was wrong, they would have thought that my proficiency was not good.
>
> **TE:** But I think this is completely wrong because by admitting your mistakes the learners will trust you better. If they understand that some of the things that you tell them are wrong, they won't trust you at all. So whenever you do not

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know something or make a mistake admit that you were wrong and explain to your students that no teacher is perfect.

N: Ok!

One of the problems with her was that most of the times she made a mistake, she would not accept that she was wrong. As one of the learners at that class was almost an advanced one, he found one of the mistakes which was related to Roman numerals. When the teacher was writing the numbers on the board, she wrote IIX instead of VIII for Roman numeral eight. That student checked it on his phone immediately and told the teacher the correct answer. As the teacher did not accept it, he came to the front and showed it to the teacher. After knowing that she was wrong, the teacher told the learners that Roman numerals sometimes have exceptions which was wrong for that number.

While the mediator was listening to the tape, he paused the taped and talked about it with the novice teacher. While the novice teacher thought that admitting mistakes is face threatening, the teacher educator said that admitting mistakes makes the learners trust you more.

As the analyses showed, by using supplementary tools like observation and stimulated recall besides using narration, the researchers gained deeper understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of both the

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teacher and the learners. If the researchers had used traditional methods, they might have not reached this understanding.

4.3. Analyzing the Students' Narrations

To answer the third research question, all of the novice teacher's students were asked to write narrations after each session. On the whole, about 750 narrations were written by the students during 20 sessions and then analyzed by the researchers. Some of the students' written narrations are presented below to find out what their attitudes and feelings were during the first five sessions. In fact, the Persian narrations were first analyzed and then translated into English. As mentioned earlier, 20 percent of the translations were also translated by another reviewer to check the adequacy of the translations. S stands for student.

Excerpt 10: The students' narrations before their teacher was mediated

> **S1:** I hate English language, but as you were friendly in the first session, I think I'm going to like it.
>
> **S2:** This session was good and as you talked about why it is necessary to learn English, I am motivated now.
>
> **S3:** I liked your knowledge about language teaching and the necessity of learning English.

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> **S4:** I was stressed during all of my English classes, because I had many bad memories as a learner, but as you said the scores are not important for you and our development is the most important thing, my stress level decreased.
>
> **S5:** I love English and learning it is interesting to me. I like to speak English wherever I travel and to be a tour leader, because I've heard that the salary is good and tourists give you a tip.
>
> **S6:** You teach so fast and do not review what you have taught! Please teach slower and write everything on the board.
>
> **S7:** Please teach reading paragraph by paragraph, because I don't understand anything and please repeat words and grammar rules more.

All of the narrations in the first five sessions showed that the students liked the way the novice teacher talked with them and also about the things she referred to. Actually, she talked about the reasons why learners should learn English like the need to write their papers in English when they become a graduate student, the need to speak English in some conferences and so on. She also worked on integrative motivation of the students in that she talked about the need to learn English for those who

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want to live in English speaking countries. She also decreased the stress of the students by saying that the development of the learners is more important than their scores.

She also built rapport with the learners by asking them to talk about their previous experiences and their cities. This was effective in that all of their narrations showed that they liked the teacher and her identity. Analysis of the narrations showed that some of the students hated English, because their previous English teachers were not good enough to pay attention to the feelings of the learners.

Even an interview with one of the learners who was from another city showed that she hated English because her teacher had a different religion and mistreated her several times during the class. Actually, she had lived in a city where she was the only learner who had a different religion from the others. Another interview showed that one of them did not like learning English because her teachers at high school were just working on translation and grammar.

The observation by the researcher and the effect of the teacher's practice on the learners in the first session showed that, although the novice teacher had no experience in teaching, her scientific knowledge about stress, motivation, learners' style of learning and language methods increased the learners' motivation to a great degree.

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However, most of the narrations showed that she was teaching so fast and a few of the students believed that she was teaching slowly. Based on the observations by the researcher and also analysis of the book contents and the sessions needed to cover the book, it was understood that she was teaching so fast. One of the problems with her practice was that she did not review the contents she had taught the previous session. The other problem with her was that she only read the texts and translated some of the words and nothing more.

On the whole, most of the learners liked the way the teacher treated them, specially paying attention to their emotions and feelings, but they did not like the way the teacher taught English.

As mentioned before, their teacher was mediated after the fifth session and her students were also asked to write a narration anonymously after each session. About 550 narrations were analyzed by the researcher for 15 sessions.

Excerpt 11: The students' narration after the teacher was mediated

> **S8:** You are one of the best teachers I have ever had. You are like our friends and unlike other teachers you are not strict. I like you to be my teacher forever.

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S9: I like you personality and it is so good that you are like our friends. I like the way you teach and I think the speed of your teaching is getting better.

S10: I have been studying at this university for seven semesters and you are among the top three, because you are treating us very well.

S11: After your talk in the first session, I was really motivated but now I hate English because I do not understand anything. Maybe it is because of the speed of your teaching.

S12: When students solve the exercises you do not repeat the answers and I do not understand them.

The analysis of the students' narrations and interviews with them in the fifth to the tenth session showed that their language proficiency was an effective factor in their ideas about their teachers. Although their teacher decreased the speed of teaching by doing some activities like reviewing, a few of the learners still taught that she was teaching fast. One of the reasons most of the learners believed that she was teaching too fast could be that their English proficiency was not good comparing to the difficulty of the book and they needed more practice and reviewing. This is important because the class was heterogeneous consisting of the students with

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different English backgrounds and the book was advanced and hard for most of them.

On the whole, most of the students liked her personality because the atmosphere was almost friendly. The authority of the teacher was also good because she paid special attention to regulations and disciplines. Some learners liked working on extracurricular activities and some did not, but on the whole most of them liked the class.

The narrations from the 11th to the last session were also analyzed to get a better picture of the feelings, emotions and thought processes of the learners. Some of them are provided.

S13: Please translate the reading and the vocabulary part.

S14: Please speak Persian more because I do not understand when you speak in English.

S15: Giving lectures was a great idea and I really like it. Please teach in English completely.

S16: I want to talk in front of others but I cannot do it because I am shy and I am afraid that the students laugh at me.

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S17: I think you can control the class very well and paying attention to some disciplines is great, but you are not a strict teacher.

S18: The only thing I want is to pass this course.

S19: When you talked about skimming and scanning, I used these strategies while reading.

S20: I always wanted to talk but I didn't because I was shy. When you started calling names, I had to talk and it was good.

S21: The idea of group work was excellent as most of us worked together and talked with each other. When I came to the front of the class, I was really embarrassed, but little by little everything got normal. As we are university students, we need to learn to talk in front of the class.

Again most of the learners liked the personality of the teacher as she made a friendly atmosphere when teaching. Most of the students liked her new practice especially new techniques like brainstorming, extensive reading, skimming and group work. These strategies made them talk more in English and they became motivated.

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However, a few of the learners who were basic students did not like these new practices as they asked teacher to translate more words and to talk mostly in Persian. They somehow resisted speaking in English. Lack of motivation or their previous experiences to learn English could be a reason for that. All in all, analyses of the narrations, the observation by the researcher and interview with learners showed that most of them liked the class as it moved from a teacher-centered class and mostly Persian to a learner-centered and mostly English class and that was the reason that most of the learners were more satisfied comparing to the first five sessions.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the effect of mediation on a novice teacher and the effect of the transformation of the teacher on the learners' emotions and practices. Analysis of the first five sessions showed that the teacher used traditional techniques like over-reliance on translation and using the first language when teaching general English. However, the result of the study after the mediation showed that the novice teacher was responsive to most of the mediations as she always sought mediation from the teacher educator and most of her practices changed dramatically. Actually the talk between the mediator and the novice teacher made a mediational space where the novice teacher brought into conscious awareness her emotions and the interaction made a space where she could develop (Johnson & Golombek, 2013). The study also showed that although the teacher was supposed to

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meet the expectations of the university and the greatest challenge for her was that the class was heterogeneous, she could adapt some of her practices to help her students develop more. Actually, the class moved from mostly teacher-centered to learner-centered gradually as the learners got more active comparing to the first five sessions. Using techniques like group work, conversational routines, lectures and writing paragraphs made the learners use English more in their activities which showed increasing level of students' participation.

Although a few of the basic learners liked the previous practices of the teacher, the narrations of most of them showed that they liked the change in their teacher's practice as they were less active in the first five sessions, but step-by-step they were the ones who talked in the class. They also liked the personality of the teacher as she made a friendly atmosphere when teaching. On the whole, the findings provided evidence of mediation's applicability on the transformation of a novice teacher and confirmed previous findings in other studies (e.g., Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Actually, the interaction between the teacher educator and the novice teacher became a space where they made their beliefs, emotions and thoughts explicit (Johnson & Golombek, 2013).

Based on the results of the study, a number of pedagogical implications can be drawn. First, the role of an expert teacher educator to help novice teachers develop their potentials is highlighted. If novice

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teachers are provided with help as they start teaching, the complexities of teacher development can be traced while these complexities are being shaped. Teacher educators can also diagnose the novice teachers' weaknesses and compensate them by providing strategic mediation.

Second, the need for EFL teachers to communicate the importance of what they do in their classes to their students is shown because even after the development of the teacher in this study and positive changes in her practice, some learners were not yet satisfied as what they expected from an English class was not in line with the teacher's expectations and with what the research in the field recommends.

Third, the results showed that teacher educators should pay special attention to the emotions and feelings of the teachers as emotions and thought processes of them play an important role in their practice. In fact, when teachers experience cognitive/emotional dissonance, their potentials and their practices are affected by the dissonance which in turn underestimates their ability.

Fourth, using tools like observations, narrations, and interviews in a socially mediated interaction between the teacher educators and the teachers allows the teacher educators to enter the world of the teachers. According to Johnson and Worden (2014), teacher educators can reshape the teachers' practices and behaviors in these activities.

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