

# The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Community Language Teaching: A Case Study of Iranian Intermediate L2 Learners

Hassan Banaruee, Hooshang Khoshima\*, Omid Khatin-Zadeh

Chabahar Maritime University, Chabahar, Iran

**Abstract** This study aimed to explore the differences between high and low-EQ scorers in learning an L2. To achieve this objective, a group of 30 intermediate learners attended a course in which community language teaching was used to teach speaking skills to the learners. Half of the participants had high EQs and the other half had low EQs. Speaking ability of these participants was checked by a pre-test before treatment and a post-test after treatment. Results of these tests showed that high-EQ L2 learners benefit more from those courses in which community language teaching is used to teach speaking skills to learners. It is suggested that being more aware of the feelings of themselves and others can be an influential factor in the success of those L2 learners who are taught by community language teaching. This is in agreement with humanistic approaches to language teaching that emphasize the role of emotional factors in the process of language development. The findings of this study suggest further lines of investigation through which the impact of EQ on L2 acquisition can be explored.

**Keywords** Emotional intelligence, Community language teaching, EQ

## 1. Introduction and Literature Review

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and degree of achievement among Iranian L2 learners. Emotional intelligence is one of the topics that have attracted a lot of attention among researchers working in various fields, including psychology and language teaching. The relationship between emotional intelligence and performance in various cognitive and linguistic abilities has been a topic of interest for researchers. This study focused on the speaking ability of L2 learners who attended a course in which community language teaching was used.

### 1.1. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the awareness of an individual of his/her feelings and other's feelings and the ability to manage them (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Emotional quotient (EQ) is the ability to recognize emotions, to access and generate them in order to aid thought, to comprehend emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively control them to advance emotional and intellectual growth (ibid). Our emotional intelligence helps

us to evaluate our own and others' emotions, express feelings appropriately, and regulate emotions in order to achieve a goal (Ghabanchi & Rastegar, 2014; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Thorndike (1920) defines EQ as the ability to understand and manage others and to act intelligently. EQ has been defined by using different terms by many researchers in the field. The definitions have some commonalities as well as some differences. Emotional intelligence has been described as the ability to recognize, understand, and adjust emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998). Emotional intelligence reflects abilities to combine intelligence, empathy and emotions to enhance thought and understanding of interpersonal dynamics. The term "emotional intelligence" initially appeared in two articles. Leuner (1966) was one of the first researchers who used the term in academic writings. Gardner (1983) used the term in subjects related to intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. EQ has been discussed in the literature of the field for a long time (for example, Greenspan, 1989; Leuner, 1966), although it was in 1990 that the construct was introduced in its current form (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Mayer, Salovey, Caruso (2000) developed a way for scientifically measuring people's emotions. They said that a high EQ individual can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings, and manage emotions, than others. They added that solving emotional problems likely requires less cognitive effort for this individual.

\* Corresponding author:

khoshima@cmu.ac.ir (Hooshang Khoshima)

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## 1.2. Community Language Teaching

According to Moskowitz (1978), community language teaching refers to a group of methods that are called humanistic techniques. Moskowitz adds that humanistic techniques blend what the language learner feels with what s/he thinks. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), humanistic techniques engage the whole person, including emotions, linguistic knowledge, and behavioral skills. La Forge (1983) says that in an L2 classroom, learners' intimacy deepens as the class becomes a community of language learners. The desire to develop intimacy with other learners pushes them forward in the process of learning (ibid). Community language learning is holistic; that is, it involves cognitive and affective factors (Curran, 1972). That is why it is called whole-person learning. In this method of language teaching, learning takes place in a communicative context (ibid).

Having administered a pre-test before treatment and a post-test after treatment, this study intended to examine the role of emotional intelligence in the growth of speaking ability in a course that community language teaching was used. To this end, a group of high EQ learners and a group of low-EQ learners attended a two-month course of speaking. In this way, the study tried to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and growth of speaking ability in a class that is taught by techniques of community language teaching?
2. If there is a significant difference between high-EQ learners and low-EQ learners in this course, how can this difference be explained?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

Participants of the study were a group of 30 undergraduate students in the Department of English at Chabahar Maritime University. They were between 19 and 23 years old. This group consisted of 19 males and 11 females. A sample of Michigan TOEFL test was used to determine their proficiency in English. Based on the results of this test, only those students who were at intermediate level of English proficiency were selected for the main part of the study.

### 2.2. Instruments

Before conducting the main part of the study, a sample of Michigan TOEFL test was used to select those students who were at the intermediate level of proficiency in English. Also, the Persian translation of Bar-On-EI test was used to measure EQ of the participants (See the Appendix). The validity and reliability of Persian translation of this test have been confirmed by Dehshiri (2003). This test included 133

items. Participants were expected to answer the items on the basis of a Likert scale that consisted of 5 options, ranging from 'Never' (1 score) to 'Always' (5 scores). The sum of these scores for each participant was taken as EQ score of that participant. Therefore, the minimum possible score was 0 and the maximum possible score was 665. In addition to these, a voice recorder was used to record the voice of the participants during speaking test for re-checking and assigning scores. Two raters listened to these records and assigned scores independently.

### 2.3. Procedure

First, a sample of Michigan TOEFL test was administered among a large group of undergraduate students in the Department of English of Chabahar Maritime University. Only those who were at intermediate level of English proficiency were selected for the main part of the study. Then, Bar-On-EI test was used to select 15 high-EQ learners (with a score of higher than 340) and 15 low-EQ learners (with a score of lower than 340). Before receiving treatment, participants attended a pre-test of speaking. This test was administered by the researchers of the study. Then, they attended a community language teaching course of speaking for two months. All participants attended the same class that was taught by one of the researchers of the study. After treatment period, a post-test of speaking was administered to examine the progress of the participants.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

In the pre-test, each participant received two scores by two independent raters. Pearson coefficient was obtained to ensure inter-rater reliability. This value was 0.83, which was completely acceptable. For each participant, the mean of the two scores was taken as his/her score on the pre-test. Then, the data of post-test were analyzed. Inter-rater reliability of this test was checked by obtaining Pearson coefficient. This value was 0.79, which was an acceptable value. In the next stage of data analysis, two paired T-tests and two unpaired T-tests were run. The first paired T-test was used to compare the scores of high-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test. The second paired T-test was used to compare the scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test. The aim of the first unpaired T-test was to compare the scores of high-EQ participants with the scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test. The aim of the second unpaired T-test was to compare the scores of high-EQ participants with the scores of low-EQ participants in the post-test.

## 3. Results

As was mentioned, the aim of the first paired T-test was to compare the scores of high-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test. Results of this T-test have been given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The difference between scores of high-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test

|                      | Paired Differences |   | t      | df | P-value |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|--------|----|---------|
|                      | M1-M2              | 95% Confidence interval of the difference |        |    |         |
| High-EQ participants | -2.067             | From -3.002 to -1.131                     | 4.7393 | 14 | 0.0003  |

These values show that there was a significant difference between the scores of high-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test. In other words, participants of this group made a significant progress in their speaking proficiency throughout the treatment period.

Results of the second paired T-test, which aimed to compare the scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test, have been given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The difference between scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test

|                     | Paired Differences |   | t      | df | P-value |
|---------------------|--------------------|---|--------|----|---------|
|                     | M1-M2              | 95% Confidence interval of the difference |        |    |         |
| Low-EQ participants | -0.733             | From -1.123 to -0.344                     | 4.0359 | 14 | 0.0012  |

These values show that there was a significant difference between the scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test and post-test. In other words, participants of this group made a significant progress in their speaking proficiency throughout the treatment period.

Results of the first unpaired T-test, which aimed to compare the scores of high-EQ participants with the scores of low-EQ participants in the pre-test, have been given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The difference between scores of high-EQ participants and the scores of low-EQ participants before treatment

|                                      | Paired Differences |   | t      | df | P-value |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---|--------|----|---------|
|                                      | M1-M2              | 95% Confidence interval of the difference |        |    |         |
| High-EQs and low-EQs in the pre-test | -0.167             | From -1.267 to 0.934                      | 0.3102 | 28 | 0.7587  |

These values show that there was no significant difference between high-EQ participants and low-EQ participants in terms of speaking ability before receiving treatment.

Results of the second unpaired T-test, which aimed to compare the scores of high-EQ participants with the scores of low-EQ participants in the post-test, have been given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The difference between scores of high-EQ participants and scores of low-EQ participants after treatment

|                                       | Paired Differences |   | t      | df | P-value |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|--------|----|---------|
|                                       | M1-M2              | 95% Confidence interval of the difference |        |    |         |
| High-EQs and low-EQs in the post-test | 1.167              | From 0.250 to 2.083                       | 2.6077 | 28 | 0.0145  |

These values show that there was a significant difference between high-EQ participants and low-EQ participants after treatment. High-EQ participants performed significantly better than low-EQ participants after receiving treatment. In other words, although the treatment led to progress in the speaking proficiency among the participants of both groups, the progress among high-EQ participants was more significant.

## 4. Discussions

As was mentioned in the results, both high-EQ and low-EQ participants benefitted from community language teaching and made a significant progress throughout treatment period. However, degree of progress among high-EQ participants was significantly higher than low-EQ participants. The question that is raised here is that why high-EQ L2 learners highly benefit from community language teaching. To answer this question, we have to look at the nature of community language teaching and the practices that are used in a class that is taught by communicative activities. Communicative practices are highly reliant on the relationships that are created in the classroom as a mini-society. In this small society, L2 learners develop their linguistic ability through interaction with each other. There is no doubt that emotions are an important dimension of any relationship that is developed among human beings, and the relationships that are formed in an L2 classroom are not an exception. Therefore, it might be suggested that high-EQ L2 learners benefit more in a class that is taught by community language teaching because they are more successful in understanding others and cooperating with others. This puts them in a stronger position in those linguistic activities that are reliant on the relationships among L2 learners in a small society. Being more aware of other's feelings can help high-EQ L2 learners to overcome affective hurdles that might prevent linguistic interactions among learners in the classroom. In fact, this can be a strong point for high-EQ learners and an effective tool for facilitating interactions in the classroom.

Any interaction in language classroom involves at least two parties. The high emotional ability of one of the involved parties could have a positive psychological impact on other parties. This positive impact could strengthen relationships. In other words, the positive psychological impact has a bilateral nature. In the interactions that take place among learners, when one party sends a signal indicating that s/he

understands others, the other learners become more motivated to participate in communicative activities. This can be crucially important for the progress of learners in a class that is taught by communicative methods of language teaching. In such an environment, learners can easily agree on a common goal and cooperate with each other to achieve that shared goal. This is psychologically very important and can function as a major source of motivation for learners. In fact, a small community in which learners have close bonds and share a common goal is the right place for the development of linguistic skills. In this community, learners do their best to communicate with each other and send their messages across through the networks of community.

The role of emotions has been emphasized by humanistic approaches to language learning and language acquisition. Humanistic approaches take this view that the process of linguistic development involves the whole dimensions of human life. Among these dimensions, feelings are crucially important because they could be a major force of motivation for pushing learners forward. On the other hand, negative feelings could be a hurdle for learners. In both cases, having a high EQ can be a great help for learners. In the first case (positive feelings), learners become aware that things are going in the right direction and they can even facilitate this process. In the latter case (negative feelings), they can employ proper strategies to remove emotional hurdles that could disrupt the processes of language learning and language acquisition in the classroom. All of these objectives can be achieved if L2 learners have a high degree of

awareness of their own feelings and those of others in the context of classroom as a small community.

## 5. Conclusions

Results obtained in a course that community language teaching is used are highly dependent on the strength of social bonds that are formed throughout the course. There are a number of factors that might influence these bonds. Among these factors, emotional ones play a crucial role. Results obtained in this study indicated that those L2 learners who have a high EQ are more successful in such courses. Even the presence of these learners in a class that is taught by community language teaching can benefit other L2 learners. This is in agreement with the position that is taken by humanistic approaches to language teaching. Therefore, it is suggested that EQ of L2 learners be taken into consideration in the planning for those courses in which community language teaching is used. In this way, better results can be achieved. It seems that a combination of high-EQ and low-EQ L2 learners in the classroom is the optimal way that can benefit various groups of learners, including those who have low EQs. The final point that must not be ignored is the role of cultural factors. The way that L2 learners interact with each other in a class that is taught by community language teaching can be very different from culture to culture. This is an issue that must seriously be taken into account in any planning for such courses.

## Appendix

به نام خدا

EQ پرسشنامه

این پرسشنامه دارای جملاتی است با پاسخ دادن به آنها احساس، طرز فکر و نحوه رفتارشان را در موقعیت ها و زمانهای مختلف توصیف میشود. هر سؤال دارای پنج جواب است:

- 1- هرگز (هرگز در مورد من صادق نیست)
- 2- بندرت (بندرت در مورد من صادق است)
- 3- گاهی (گاهی در مورد من صادق است)
- 4- معمولاً (معمولاً در مورد من صادق است)
- 5- همیشه (همیشه در مورد من صادق است)

دستور العمل:

- 1- جملات زیر را بخوانید و آن جمله ای که بهترین روحیات شما را توصیف می کند در پاسخنامه علامت بزنید.
- 2- پاسخ درست، غلط، خوب یا بد وجود ندارد. توجه داشته باشید به جمله ای پاسخ دهید که واقعاً بیانگر حال شماست نه آن چیزی که دوست دارید باشید.

3- این پرسشنامه محدودیت زمانی ندارد اما سعی کنید سریع پاسخ دهید.

4- به همه سئوالات پاسخ دهید.

"با تشکر از توجه شما در پاسخ به سئوالات"

- 1- سعی می‌کنم برای حل مشکلاتم برنامه ریزی کنم و با دقت عمل کنم.
- 2- برایم سخت است که از زندگی لذت ببرم.
- 3- ترجیح می‌دهم کارهایی انجام دهم که نحوه انجام آن دقیقاً مشخص شده باشد.
- 4- می‌دانم چگونه از عهده مشکلات سخت برآیم.
- 5- با هر کس که برخورد می‌کنم از او خوشم می‌آید.
- 6- سعی می‌کنم زندگی هدفمندی داشته باشم.
- 7- کاملاً برایم راحت است عواطفم را بیان کنم.
- 8- سعی میکنم نگاه واقع بینانه ای به زندگی داشته باشم و از خیال پردازی و رویا پردازی بپرهیزم.
- 9- من قادر به درک حالتهای هیجانی خود هستم.
- 10- در ابراز محبت به دیگران مشکل دارم.
- 11- در اکثر موقعیت ها به خودم اطمینان دارم.
- 12- احساس میکنم که دچار مشکل فکری (روحی) هستم.
- 13- کنترل خشم برایم مشکل است.
- 14- شروع فعالیتهای تازه برایم دشوار است.
- 15- وقتی با یک موقعیت مشکل مواجه می‌شوم، مایلم تمام اطلاعات لازم را در مورد آن جمع آوری کنم.
- 16- دوست دارم به دیگران کمک کنم.
- 17- لبخند زدن برایم سخت است.
- 18- قادر به درک احساسات دیگران نیستم.
- 19- وقتی با دیگران کار می‌کنم، تمایل دارم بیشتر به نظرات آنان عمل کنم تا به نظرات خودم.
- 20- معتقدم می‌توانم به بالاترین موقعیت ها دست پیدا کنم.
- 21- من واقعا نمی‌دانم چه توانایی هایی دارم.
- 22- نمی‌توانم نظراتم را برای دیگران بیان کنم.
- 23- برایم سخت است که عواطف عمیق خود را با دیگران در میان بگذارم.
- 24- من اعتماد به نفس ندارم.
- 25- فکر می‌کنم از نظر روحی بیمار هستم.
- 26- نسبت به اکثر کاره ایم خوش بین هستم.
- 27- وقتی شروع به حرف زدن می‌کنم قطع کردن آن برایم مشکل است.
- 28- به طور کلی سازگاری با محیط برایم دشوار است.
- 29- دوست دارم پیش از حل مشکل آن را مرور کنم.
- 30- سوء استفاده کردن از دیگران برایم دشوار نیست، به خصوص اگر آن ها مستحق آن باشند.
- 31- فرد شادی هستم.
- 32- ترجیح می‌دهم دیگران برایم تصمیم بگیرند.
- 33- می‌توانم بدون عصبی شدن زیاد از عهده ی فشار و ناراحتی ها برآیم.
- 34- نسبت به دیگران خوش بین هستم.
- 35- برایم سخت است که عواطفم را درک کنم.
- 36- در چند سال گذشته موفقیت های اندکی داشته ام.
- 37- هنگامی که از دست دیگران عصبانی هستم می‌توانم به آن ها بگویم.
- 38- تجارب عجیب و غریبی دارم که نمی‌توانم آن را بگویم.

- 39- دوست شدن دیگران برایم آسان است.
- 40- من برای خودم احترام قائل می شوم.
- 41- کارهای غیر عادی از من سر می زنند.
- 42- زود از کوره در می روم و و این باعث مشکلاتی برایم شده است.
- 43- نمی توانم نظرم را عوض کنم.
- 44- خیلی خوب احساسات دیگران را درک می کنم.
- 45- وقتی با مشکلی مواجه می شوم در اولین قدم درباره ی آن به فکر و تامل می پردازم.
- 46- دیگران به سختی می توانند به من وابسته شوند.
- 47- از زندگی ام راضی هستم.
- 48- برایم سخت است که مستقلانه تصمیم بگیرم.
- 49- تحت فشار، عملکردم خوب نیست.
- 50- در زندگی ام دست به هیچ کار بدی نمی زنم.
- 51- از کاره ایم لذت نمی برم.
- 52- برایم سخت است عواطف صمیمانه ام را بیان کنم.
- 53- سایرین افکار مرا درک نمی کنند.
- 54- دوست دارم جزء بهترین افراد باشم.
- 55- دوستانم می توانند موضوعات خصوصی خودشان را به من بگویند.
- 56- درباره ی خودم احساس خوبی ندارم.
- 57- من چیزهای عجیبی می بینم که دیگران نمی بینند.
- 58- دیگران به من می گویند هنگام بحث صدايت را پایین بیاور.
- 59- من به آسانی با موقعیت های جدید سازگار می شوم.
- 60- موقع حل یک مشکل ابتدا راه حل های مختلف را در نظر می گیرم، سپس بهترین را انتخاب می کنم.
- 61- اگر بچه ای را ببینم که به خاطر گم کردن پدر و مادرش گریه می کند به او کمک می کنم تا پدر و مادرش را پیدا کند، حتی اگر در آن لحظه کار زیادی داشته باشم.
- 62- از بودن با دیگران لذت می برم.
- 63- من نسبت به اینکه چه عواطفی دارم هوشیارم.
- 64- احساس می کنم به سختی می توانم اضطرابم را کنترل کنم.
- 65- من از هیچ چیز ناراحت نمی شوم.
- 66- نسبت به انجام فعالیت های مورد علاقه ام رغبتی نشان نمیدهم.
- 67- وقتی با کسی مخالف باشم می توانم مخالفتم را بیان کنم.
- 68- کمتر نسبت به اتفاقات دور و برم توجه دارم و دوست دارم آنچه در اطرافم اتفاق می افتد را رها کنم.
- 69- با دیگران راحت کنار می آیم.
- 70- برایم سخت است که خودم را همانگونه که هستم بپذیرم.
- 71- احساس می کنم که از بدنم جدا هستم.
- 72- من اتفاقاتی که برای دیگران رخ می دهد را دنبال می کنم.
- 73- آدمی کم صبر و تحملی هستم.
- 74- میتوانم عادت های قبلی ام را ترک کنم.
- 75- موقع حل مشکلات به سختی می توانم بهترین راه حل را انتخاب کنم.
- 76- اگر در بعضی مواقع با قانون شکنی مشکل حل شود این کار را می کنم.
- 77- افسرده هستم.
- 78- می دانم در موقعیت های دشوار چگونه آرامشم را حفظ کنم.
- 79- در زندگی ام دروغ نگفته ام.
- 80- من معمولاً در مواقع سخت هم می توانم کارهایم را ادامه بدهم.
- 81- من دوست دارم کارهایی را که مورد علاقه ام هستند انجام داده و گسترش دهم.

- 82- برایم سخت است هر وقت که بخواهم "نه" بگویم.
- 83- غرق در رویا و خیال پردازی هستم.
- 84- من و دوستانم به روابط نزدیک مان اهمیت بسیار می دهیم.
- 85- از شخصیت خودم راضی هستم.
- 86- عصبانیت من شدید است.
- 87- برایم دشوار است که در زندگی عادی ام تغییر ایجاد کنم.
- 88- حتی هنگامی که غمگین و گرفته هستم، نسبت به آنچه بر من می گذرد هوشیارم.
- 89- هنگام مقابله با پیشآمدها درباره ی همه راه حل ها فکر می کنم.
- 90- به دیگران احترام می گذارم.
- 91- در زندگی احساس شادی نمی کنم.
- 92- بیشتر دنبال رو هستم تا رهبر.
- 93- برایم سخت است با امور ناخوشایند روبرو شوم.
- 94- کاری خلاف قانون انجام نداده ام.
- 95- از موضوعات مورد علاقه ام لذت می برم.
- 96- برایم کاملاً راحت است که بگویم چه فکری کرده ام.
- 97- تمایل دارم مسایل را بزرگ جلوه دهم.
- 98- نسبت به عواطف دیگران حساس هستم.
- 99- با دیگران روابط خوبی دارم.
- 100- از ظاهری که دارم راضی هستم.
- 101- شخص عجیبی هستم.
- 102- زود از کوره در می روم.
- 103- تغییر در شیوه زندگی برایم دشوار است.
- 104- من فکر می کنم رعایت قانون امر مهمی است.
- 105- روزهای تعطیل را دوست دارم.
- 106- هر چند گاهی مشکلاتی پیش می آید، اما به طور کلی فکر میکنم اوضاع بر وفق مراد است.
- 107- دوست دارم به دیگران متکی باشم.
- 108- در حل مشکلات مهم به توانایی هایم ایمان دارم.
- 109- از کارهای گذشته ام پشیمان نیستم.
- 110- تا آن جا که ممکن است سعی می کنم دنبال لذت طلبی نباشم.
- 11- دیگران فکر می کنند من قاطعیت ندارم.
- 112- به راحتی می توانم از خیال پردازی دست بردارم و واقعیت را در نظر بگیرم.
- 113- دیگران مرا فردی اجتماعی می شناسند.
- 114- از آنچه در نظر دیگران هستم خوشحالم.
- 115- افکار عجیبی دارم که دیگران نمی فهمند.
- 116- برایم سخت است عواطفم را بیان کنم.
- 117- بد اخلاق هستم.
- 118- درباره ی حل مشکلاتم بسیار جدی هستم و به راه حل های مختلف آن فکر می کنم.
- 119- دیدن غم دیگران برایم دشوار است.
- 120- دوست دارم خوش باشم.
- 121- فکر می کنم من بیشتر به دیگران نیازمندم تا دیگران به من.
- 122- مضطرب هستم.
- 123- روحیه خوبی دارم.
- 124- از جریحه دار کردن عواطف دیگران اجتناب می کنم.
- 125- در زندگی برنامه مشخصی ندارم.

- 126- برایم مشکل است که بر سر حقوقم پا فشاری کنم.  
 127- نمی توانم مسائل را درست و همانگونه که هستند در نظر بگیرم.  
 128- با دوستانم تماس ندارم.  
 129- با توجه به ضعف ها و قوت هایم درباره ی خودم احساس خوبی دارم.  
 130- به راحتی خشمگین می شوم.  
 131- چنانچه مجبور به ترک خانه شوم نمی توانم خودم را با آن وضعیت سازگار کنم.  
 132- قبل از شروع کاری جدید اغلب احساس می کنم در این کار موفق نمی شوم.  
 133- من با علاقه مندی و صداقت به سوالات بالا پاسخ دادم.

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