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## THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE ACQUISITION OF TRANSLATION SKILLS AND TRANSLATOR TRAINING: DOES A TRANSLATOR OR INTERPRETER NEED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*This study aims to highlight the importance of studying emotional intelligence of translators and interpreters by using descriptive research methodology. Although there are many studies carried out on the role that cognitive skills such as memory, problem solving etc. play in translation process, it has only recently begun to be addressed that emotional intelligence should be incorporated into Translation Studies. Aside from cognitive factors, non-cognitive factors also play an important role for translation and interpreting studies. One of the non-cognitive factors is emotional intelligence including skills such as personal, emotional and social competencies. However, universities or institutions providing translation courses are not well equipped with the sub-components of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, the ability of recognizing and transferring own and other people's emotions. The curriculum does not provide any direct course to develop such skills. And the aptitude testing applied especially for interpreting candidates includes mostly cognitive skills. Thus the aim of this study is to highlight the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence into Translation Studies and to put forth that components of translational competence actually have similarities with the sub-elements of emotional intelligence.*

**Key words:** Emotional Intelligence, Intellectual Intelligence, Translation, Translator, Translation Process

### INTRODUCTION

Translation and interpreting process require emotional skills to be used besides source and target language competence, cultural competence, text competence etc. Because working life of a translator and an interpreter necessitates to be able to adapt to the competitive environment of working conditions, to have good customer relations and constant communication with people. Interpreting and translation include both difficult and complex processes and the fact that there is not any professional chamber that will protect the rights of translators and interpreters in most of the countries reduces the prestige of the profession. For example, interpreting as a profession does not have any professional chamber in Turkey and there are translation offices that both operate on the principle of cheap labor and prefer not to pay money for the translation task. In addition, the fact that per-unit pricing in translation has not been determined in a certain way or the difficulties experienced in making the payment and the short time given to make the translation, and long working hours etc. make translation and interpreting as a profession more difficult.

The content of the concept of intelligence has become more extensive thanks to the studies conducted in the 1990s thus paving the way for the concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) to come to the fore along with intellectual intelligence (IQ). Uncontrollable spontaneous emotions can now be controlled and improved thanks to the within the scope of emotional intelligence developed self-awareness of one's self to recognize their feelings, to be able to handle them and understand the feelings of others, to maintain relationships. By drawing attention to the concept of emotional intelligence, the question arises as to what extent the translator performing a linguistic, cultural and communicative

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act can control his/her feelings or whether she/he uses emotional intelligence in the translation process. In today's constant changing world, translation profession necessitates an emotional proficiency in the project's preparation, cooperation with others, dealing with customers as well as social awareness and relationship management. Although skills within the scope of emotional intelligence are crucial for translators, lessons given in the academic community often focus on the acquisition of language and cultural skills, world knowledge or domain knowledge. Thus the aim of this study is to draw attention to the importance of the emotional intelligence for translators and interpreters.

## DEFINITION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concept of emotional intelligence was defined for the first time in 1990 by Salovey and Mayer as the ability to understand emotions and feelings of others. And the concept of social intelligence put forward by Thorndike in 1920 constitutes the foundation of emotional intelligence and Gardner introduced the Multiple Intelligences Theory in 1983 with his book *Frames of Mind* based on the concept of social intelligence. According to this theory, the uniform of different skills is required in order to be successful. According to Gardner (1983), social intelligence consists of personal and interpersonal intelligence of people.

The foundations of emotional intelligence have been laid as academic intelligence or cognitive skills do not prepare persons for the opportunities of life or for the changes that occur and there are people who do have perfect cognitive skills but fail despite being so good. Psychologists such as Gardner (1986), Mayer and Salovey (1990) and Goleman (1995) state that people have different mental characteristics and it is not enough merely to have cognitive competencies to be successful in the working life. Therefore, the concept of intelligence has been redefined and new intelligence definitions including many factors like social and emotional competencies have been put forth instead of a single factor intelligence-oriented definition of cognitive competencies. Although many individuals have high cognitive ability, they fail either in the working life or in social life, which led the concept of intelligence to more questioning.

To understand the emotional intelligence, one must look at the development stage of the human brain. Emotion centers were developed from the brain stem regulating basic vital processes and surrounding the spinal cord. And neocortex originated from these emotion centers during the evolution. That is to say, the neocortex where conscious thought is generated actually developed from these centers and our emotional brain has been there before the rational brain in this case. Arts, culture and civilization have been created through the neocortex (Goleman, 2014:37-38). The way how amygdala functions and its connection to neocortex lie behind the emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2014: 43). According to a study conducted by LeDoux, while neocortex, the center of conscious thought is at the decision stage, amygdala being the expert of the emotional state gain control of emotional response. Ledoux has found that the amygdala does not develop responses based on stimuli from the neocortex, but the amygdala can quickly trigger the emotional response (Goleman, 2014:52-53).

Emotional intelligence which is also a mental skill has been defined by different persons and different models of emotional intelligence have also been established. According to Goleman (2014) who has accelerated the academic studies on the sense of emotional intelligence, there are two minds, rational and emotional ones and two different intelligences and the brain cannot work at full capacity without emotional intelligence. Emotional ability is a meta-ability and determines how well other capabilities including intelligence can be used (Goleman, 2014:65). Emotional intelligence is defined by Goleman as being aware of emotions, personality traits, determination, perseverance, enthusiasm, self-control and ability to motivate yourself (Goleman, 2014:62). Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model is divided into personal and social competence. While personal competencies include self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation and social competences include empathy and social skills. Goleman (1995), emphasized that the difference between people arises from the manner in handling their relations. Low emotional intelligence affects negatively the intelligence level of persons and so will reduce the production. Also it causes a reduction in a person's IQ level. Goleman also states that emotional intelligence plays an important role in job performance (Titrek, 2013: 81).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1990), who based the emotional intelligence on five different components such as self-awareness, self-control, motivation, social awareness and social management, emotional intelligence is the ability to understand other's emotions and feelings (see Titrek, 2013:63). And Baron created an emotional intelligence model rooted in core competences like personal skills, interpersonal skills, social adjustment, stress management and general mental state. Emotional intelligence consists of individual, personal, social competence and skills which help individuals cope successfully with the incoming pressure and demand (Titrek, 2013:92).

## THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Emotional intelligence, integrating emotional intelligence into Translation Studies and personality traits have been under researched. However, these topics are of great importance to be integrated into Translation Studies in terms of understanding the translation process of translators and interpreters. Because personal and emotional characteristics are known to play an important role in translation performance (Hubscher-Davidson, 2013:325). However, researchers have begun personality researches in second language acquisition and interpreting studies only since the beginning of the 2000s (Rosiers, Eyckmans, Bauwens, 2014:56).

Functional Translation Theories raised the questions of how to meet expectations and needs of the target audience. Translators or interpreters are required to recognize target audience in order to meet the expectations and needs of the target audience. Because it is almost impossible to get to know well the members of the target audience, translators' ability to empathize plays an important role at this point. The translator must have the ability to empathize in order to understand the thoughts and feelings of customers, employers or the author of the source text. What actually translators do is to be able to understand people, situations and to be able to communicate across languages and different cultures. And intercultural communication competence includes culture specific information namely cognitive factors including knowing the elements of the language of the country, history and etc. and also to be open, tolerant and show empathy towards foreigners to understand them (Chabasse, 2009:101).

Research done previously indicates strong evidence showing the relationship between personality and work performance. For example, Hubscher Davidson (2013) has stressed the need to integrate emotional intelligence into Translation Studies and found out a relationship between certain personality traits and translation quality through MBTI test widely used in psychology to make character analysis. Especially intuitive / sensate elements were found to be significantly associated with the translation task and while the most successful students have emerged to be all intuitive, the five weakest trainees were sensors (Rosiers, Eyckmans and Bauwens, 2014:59).

According to Hubscher-Davidson, significant individual and emotional differences for the practice of interpreting and translation consist of elements such as self-esteem, stress management, perception of emotions and expression, empathy, social awareness, assertiveness, adaptability and self-motivation (Hubscher-Davidson, 2013:340). As mentioned earlier, both the personality traits and cognitive skills in general have been accepted to influence performance both in the working life in the academic field (Bontempo and Napier, 2014:87). Therefore, employers have been using personality test results to make decisions on hiring and promotion opportunities for a long time (Hogan, 1991 in Burger, 2014:268). For example, self-discipline, one of the five main elements of the Big Five personality factors which include neuroticism, extraversion, openness, compatibility and self-discipline has emerged significantly to affect performance.

Persons getting a high score in this dimension are careful, thorough and reliable. They do not work negligently and they take the time to do it properly and precisely. People who have high levels of self-discipline is usually regular, stable and make plans before starting to work and they are success-oriented (Burger, 2014: 269). On the other hand, an interpreter or translator who has a high level of self-discipline will reach the objectives, and will show more determination in the job than others who have low levels of self-discipline. A high level of self-discipline will enable translators or interpreters to cope with the challenges of translation, they will be more persistent and willing to make an extra effort to achieve the objectives and to deal with the challenges. Maybe they have to behave like that. Otherwise a translator who has a translation task including hundreds of pages to be rendered will not be able to finish it on time.

This also applies to interpreters. The results of the researches indicate that there is a close relationship between interpreting performance and general cognitive abilities specific to a number of areas and affective- cognitive characteristics (N. Macnamara, B. Moore, A. Kegl and R Conway, 2014: 123). For example, as interpreting as a profession is based on practice, practice-based professions require technical knowledge and skills as well as adaptability to changing conditions, situations and people. In particular, conference interpreting includes complex cognitive processes and it is important to be able to use specific cognitive skills to deliver performance. However, an interpreter must be ready to learn the required skills. That is to say, one's willingness to engage in such a complex cognitive activity will also affect the amount of the effort undertaken (Macnamara, B. Moore, A. Kegl and R. Conway, 2014: 111).

In particular, factors such as the high level of mental flexibility, cognitive knowledge processing and psychomotor speed, the ability to change the duty, to take risks, working memory capacity and etc. may increase the likelihood of being a skilled interpreter (Macnamara, B. Moore, A. Kegl and R. Conway, 2014: 124). Studies have revealed that highly skilled interpreters are mentally more flexible and they are more prone to take risks, they can process cognitive information more quickly and they can move more quickly and accurately in response to any change of duty. Mental flexibility and cognitive information processing speed is one of the most important indications of being a good

interpreter and willingness to be able to take risk, the ability to change the task and to some extent psychomotor speed are other characteristics of being a good interpreter (Macnamara, B. Moore, A. Kegl and R. Conway, 2014: 122).

Psychological factors such as the ability to focus, stress management play a very important role as non-cognitive elements in the process of an interpreting task. However, an interpreter will inevitably experience a continuous change in the work flow, and will always face uncertainty in the working life, namely a stress factor will always be present. However, the most important thing is to develop strategies to cope with stress throughout the career (Chabasse, 2009: 107). For example, an interpreter who has immediately negative feelings as a result of a small disappointment or criticism can not use strategies well to cope with negative emotions and negative emotions will hinder the cognitive information processing in a bad way during the translation task. This will negatively affect the ability of interpreters to concentrate, which plays a key role in the interpreting process. All of them are like rings of a chain. For example, self-efficacy of translators has an impact on the proficient source language reading comprehension, tolerance of ambiguity and documentation skills (Bolanos- Medina, 2014: 197). Again there is a relationship between self- efficacy and performance. And self- awareness enables translators to have self-confidence. Actually self- concept is partly derived from self-efficacy; self- confidence is one of the most obvious features of high self- efficacy and self-awareness is a precondition for these concepts (Bolanos- Medina, 2014).

However, many elements such as emotional stability at one end of the scale and at the other end of the scale being emotionally unstable, called usually as neuroticism also affect stress resistance. People who go through emotional troubles and whose feelings change extremely will receive a high score in Neuroticism Factor, one of the Big Five personality factors. People with high levels of neuroticism experience more stress compared to people who have lower levels (Burger, 2006: 253). And individuals with low levels of Neuroticism (Burger, 2006) is quiet, well adjusted, are not prone to extreme and incompatible emotional responses and they are emotionally more stable and experience less negative emotions and stress (Bontempo and Napier, 2014: 90).

There are two types of connection between anxiety and performance to be both positive and negative. While a positive anxiety encourages students or employees to engage in new activities or to work harder, a negative sense of anxiety may damage cognitive functioning. The students having a severe anxiety have been observed to experience a decline in academic performance (Rosiers, Eyckmans and Bauwens, 2014:61). Therefore, as the ability to concentrate requires the use of working memory in an optimal way, the interpreters perhaps should be more flexible, less anxious, and emotionally more stable and they should have low levels of neuroticism, etc. These kind of personality characteristics enable interpreters to fulfill the duties and working memory can be used in an optimal way by preventing the negative feelings to hinder working memory. However, every translation type contains different difficulties within itself and it is important for people who take different translation tasks to have a common personality traits and there are perhaps some personality traits that distinguish interpreters from translators or sign language interpreters. For example, instructors in the department of Translation Studies have expressed that students have different personality traits. According to the results obtained from two different surveys there are individual differences between students of translation and interpreting. Students who tend to study interpreting are quite talkative, speak fluently and show especially self- confidence in the oral translation tasks, while students who take the courses of translation tend to show these personality traits less (Rosiers, June Eyckmans and Bauwens, 2014: 66).

Especially students taking interpreting courses have been observed to have a higher self-confidence compared to the students who choose to participate in written translation courses (Rosiers, Eyckmans and Bauwens, 2014: 56). When the personality profile of the students who choose either interpreting or translation are compared, those who choose to do interpreting courses are observed to be more self-confident than those who prefer translation courses (Rosiers, Eyckmans, Bauwens, 2014: 56). In another study conducted by Timarov and Salaets, self- selected interpreting students and a control group of undergraduate students were compared and it has emerged that self- selected interpreting students are cognitively more flexible and success-oriented and they suffer less from stress as compared to the control group. In a similar way, upon comparing conference interpreters who completed interpreting courses successfully with the control group, successful interpreting students were found to be cognitively more flexible, less affected from stress and benefit more from anxiety (Timarov and Salaets, 2014: 51).

And some set of personal characteristics required for students' development and success in the courses were identified in a survey conducted for over 100 students participating in the sign language interpreter program. And self-confidence of the students has been found to be an important indicator of the interpreter competence and it is a feature that needs to be improved in students. Respondents listed the ability to adapt to the particular interpretation task, self- confidence in order to carry out the interpreting task successfully and being able to take risks among the most important personality traits (Bontempo and Napier, 2014: 91). Considering the skills and capabilities of the sign language interpreter, personality traits such as reliability, willingness to learn, respect for others, ethical responsibility, professionalism, punctuality, being open-minded, common sense, flexibility and supporting colleagues come to the forefront. Also the interpreter's self-confidence, ability to self-observation, interpersonal skills, self-discipline, respect for others, assertiveness, intuition and independence play also an important role (Bontempo and Napier, 2007: 285-286).

These personality traits listed by scientists working in the field of translation studies actually indicate the elements of emotional intelligence. Many elements of emotional intelligence include the skills translators and interpreters should have. Emotional intelligence is concerned with people and situations. Although words play an important role in translating, people and situations are almost always in the translation task. Translator or interpreter seems to play with words. But actually what they do is to cope with people and situations. In doing so, they use words and language as a tool.

**Skills and capabilities in the aptitude testing and possible links with emotional intelligence**

Many models and lists have been created by different scholars to display the required skills and capabilities an interpreter or a translator need to have (Albrecht Neubert, Christina Schaffner, Gyor Hansen, PACTE, Susanne Göpferich, Hanna Risku, Radegundis Stolze etc.). Many skills and talents that may be associated with the sub-elements of emotional intelligence stand out in the lists and models. For example, personal qualities such as capacity to adapt to subject, speakers etc., public speaking, tact and diplomacy, physical and psychological stamina emerged at 1974 Paris Symposium among the ideal interpreter profiles. According to Gerver and others, skills to be acquired ability to work as a team member. The list created by Longley contain skills in the same way such as ability to work as a team member and ability to work under stress for long periods (Russo, 2014: 12).

Table 1: The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

	Definition	Characteristics
Self-Awareness	The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effects on others	Self-confidence Realistic self-assessment Sense of humor
Self-Regulation	The ability to control or redirect impulses and moods The inclination to make judgment and think before acting	Trustworthiness and integrity Comfort with ambiguity Openness to change
Motivation	A passion to work for internal reasons The inclination to follow goals with energy and persistence	Strong drive to achieve Optimism, even in the face of failure Organizational commitment
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional states of other people Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	Expertise in building and retaining talent Cross-cultural sensitivity Service to clients and customers
Social Skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks An ability to find common ground and build rapport	Effectiveness in leading change Persuasiveness Expertise in building and leading teams

Daniel Goleman (1998)

Table 2: Some basic translational competence components that can be linked with the elements of emotional intelligence

Kelly (2005)	EMT Expert Group (2009)	PACTE (2000–2008)	Susanne Göpferich (2008)	Stolze (2014)
Communicative and textual competence in at least two languages and cultures, Cultural and intercultural competence, Attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence, Self-concept, self-confidence, attention/concentration, memory, Initiative, Interpersonal competence.	Intercultural competence	Communicative competence in the source language and the target language, psycho-physiological components like emotion, (intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigor, critical spirit, knowledge of and confidence in one’s own abilities, the ability to measure one’s own abilities, motivation, etc.)	Communicative competence in at least 2 languages, motivation, translator’s self concept/ psycho-physical disposition (intelligence, ambition, perseverance, self-confidence, etc.).	Intercultural competence, To gain self-confidence Competitive pressure Customer relations

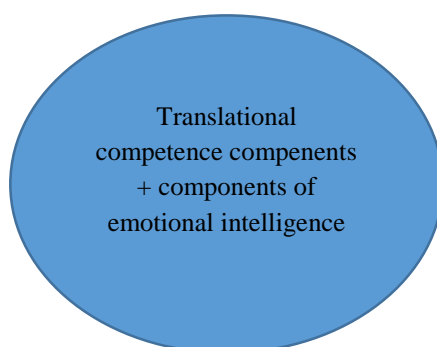
Upon comparing the components of emotional intelligence with those some basic translational competence components, it can be easily observed that there are so many similarities. For example, translators should also know both cultures well and have empathy for their target readers in order to produce an appropriate product in the target language by taking the skopes or purpose of the task into account. Translators also should be committed and disciplined, actually team workers. Because translators, revisers, researchers, managers, clients, experts, authors etc. also play an important role in the translation process. An ability to work with so many different and in groups is part of translation competence.

Likewise, a table consisting of cognitive and non-cognitive factors that determine whether one has an aptitude for interpreting or not was created by Chabasse. Non-cognitive factors are divided into three different factors including motivation, personality and self-management (Chabasse, 2009: 121). When translators have motivation, it means that they are willing to fulfill the translation tasks they get, and are open to obtain the information required by the profession, while to be patient refers to be able to withstand the challenges of the translation training. The ability of self-management is divided into two sub-components such as concentration resistance to stress. Simultaneous interpreters are able to activate their transfer skills through concentration. And personality traits in order to be successful in interpreting include flexibility, creativity, ability to empathize with the speaker in order to understand what is said, the ability to communicate, self- confidence and ability to work as a team member (Chabasse, 2009: 122). Non-cognitive traits underlying simultaneous interpreting are the ability to concentrate, stress management, flexibility and the ability to communicate (Chabasse, 2009: 120).

Although assertiveness is not included among those mentioned skills, this feature is of particular importance for professionals. Likewise, Gomez made a list in order to show the required skills for interpreters. And those skills include personality characteristics such as to adapt quickly to situations, statements and people, a pleasant voice and the ability to speak in front of people, stress management, self- management, to work as a team member, diplomacy and to have a positive self-image (Russo, 2014:16). In a study made by Bontempo and Napier (Bontempo and Napier, 2014) to be target oriented, getting high scores at self-sufficiency and having negative affectivity were found to correspond to 9% of the interpreting competence elements. Some academic Translation training programs make aptitude tests in order to determine who can take and follow interpreting or translation courses and to test especially aptitude for interpreting. But the results of entrance examinations include general interpretation skills. The social skills are not investigated and tested in a systematic way. For example, motivation is considered to be important like learning styles but it is difficult to measure it objectively and has a complex structure (Timarov and Salaets, 2014: 33).

Chabasse and Kader state that aptitude tests for interpreting should include both cognitive skills and abilities and also should include the identification of non-cognitive personal traits. Motivation, personality and self- management are among non-cognitive abilities. Concentration playing an important role in the performance of simultaneous interpreting and stress management are included under the name of self-management. Being able to focus on the task of translating also play an important role in the language transfer skills of candidate interpreters (Chabasse and Kader, 2014: 163-164). Gile (2001) also emphasized the fact that aptitude tests applied in the field of interpreting studies should measure candidates' personalities besides language competence and general cultural knowledge (Rosiers, Eyckmans and Bauwens, 2014:57). Likewise, Timarová & Ungood-Thomas (2008) performed small scale surveys at different institutions offering interpreting courses in order to find out what kind of components are tested through aptitude testing. And they discovered that such tests focus more on cognitive skills such as language and communication skills and analytical thinking, understanding and general cultural knowledge of the candidates. Although the social skills that define the skills such as motivation, the ability to learn quickly, being open-minded are also important to be a good translator or an interpreter, these essential features usually are not tested (Timarová & Ungood-Thomas, 2008: 43). Leaving social skills aside in the aptitude tests represents the missing link. Therefore, interpreting training research should focus on the issue of developing a valid test of such soft skills (Timarová & Ungood-Thomas, 2008: 44). All these soft skills include sub-components of emotional intelligence. Actually translators' tools and power should include both the components of translational competence and emotional intelligence components as illustrated in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Translator's tools and power



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result, students aiming to be translators or interpreters should have the ability to cope with stress, be open to the criticism and be emotionally stable and to be able to solve problems when faced difficulties or challenges without giving up immediately. To remain under constant stress can lead to serious health problems, and therefore especially the candidates who want to become interpreters should prefer to choose another profession if they do not have the required personality characteristics, even if they do have cognitive skills and abilities necessary for interpreting. It is of great importance for a translator or an interpreter to know herself or himself, learn to control emotions, develop the ability to communicate to solve problems, be open to criticism, deal with people, motivation and empathy. Acquiring cognitive skills like culture competence, text competence etc. cannot be sufficient to cope with the problems encountered in the professional life. Thus academic institutions should also be aware of the importance of non-cognitive skills for translation students. Students must be equipped with specific skills of emotional intelligence in order to be able to begin to work and find a suitable job that matches values and strengths after graduating from Translation Studies. These skills also play an important role in dealing with the problems in the professional life, working in coordination with colleagues and meeting the expectations and demands of clients and employers. Nowadays, people who are successful in institutions are the ones who can establish healthy relationships with colleagues, are capable of teamwork and self-confident. They are actually the ones with high emotional intelligence. Thus translational competence models can be further developed by taking emotional components into account. As translators' tools and power do not just derive from cognitive skills. The task of a translator and an interpreter is actually to build communication and to be able to communicate requires to be able to deal with people and situations. At this point other factors also play an important role.

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