

# The Effect of Translators' Emotional Intelligence on Their Translation Quality

Mohsen Varzande <sup>1,2</sup> & Esmail Jadidi <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Fars Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Department of English, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

Correspondence: Esmail Jadidi, Department of English, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran. Tel: 98-917-314-5087. E-mail: esmaeil.jadidi@yahoo.com

Received: May 13, 2015 Accepted: July 18, 2015 Online Published: July 27, 2015

doi:10.5539/elt.v6n8p104 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n8p104>

## Abstract

Translators differ from each other in many ways in terms of their knowledge, professional and psychological conditions that may directly influence their translation. The present study aimed at investigating the impact of translators' Emotional Intelligence on their translation quality. Following a *causal-comparative study*, a sample of 100 male and female professional translators, working in official or non-official translation offices or as freelance translators, were selected using purposive sampling method. Petrides & Furnham's (2001) Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – (TEIQue-SF) was administered to collect data on the participants' emotional intelligence. The participants were then asked to translate a paragraph including 232 words, from Orwell's 1984 novel, to assess their translation quality. To do this, Waddington's model D (2001) was used as the marking system. For data analysis, correlation statistical procedure was used in order to investigate the research hypothesis. Results showed that translators' academic experience significantly affects their translation quality, while no significant relationship was found between their Emotional Intelligence and their translation quality. The results also clearly depicted that the translation quality of translators with academic experience was significantly better than that of those without academic experience.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, translation quality, translator

## 1. Introduction

Translators differ from each other in many ways mainly due to their professional and psychological conditions. A combination of these individual differences and characteristics may directly influence their translation quality (Shojaee & Sahragard, 2012; Shangarffam & Abolsaba, 2009; Dongfeng & Dan, 1999).

There are a lot of questions about why two translators with the same age and academic background are different from each other in their task of translation. Recent studies made it obvious that translation has always gone hand in hand with so many factors; it should be studied along other fields, and it is not separate from them. Psychology is one of these fields and has a close relationship with translation. Psychologically, emotions and being intelligent about them is an important factor, and presumably it can heavily influence the translation activities (Farahzad, 2003). Moreover, Psycho-linguistic factors are involved in the process of translating (Shahraki, 2011).

One of the recent studies in psychology is the study of Emotional Intelligence (EI) which is considered as one of the most important dimensions of intelligence" (Murphy, 2006). Although Emotional Intelligence is a new term mostly developed in the 21st century and many scholars try to define, describe, and measure it, the endeavor has not ended. It refers to the capacities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others (Goleman, 1995). Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Emotional Quotient (EQ level) are among the factors which seem to play a significant role in manipulating the translators' mind while translating a text and consequently contribute to the task of translation (Shangarffam & Abolsaba, 2009).

On the other hand, Robinson (1997) proposed that "translation is an intelligent activity, requiring creative problem-solving in novel, textual, social, and cultural conditions". It is widely accepted that translation can be viewed as a problem-solving process in which the translator encounters problems of various sources and uses tools and resources to solve them. What makes Emotional Intelligence important is that people with Emotional

Intelligence are able to control their feelings, utilize their affective data to lead their thoughts and activities and provide themselves with more opportunities to think and be more creative and to aim their emotions at solving problems which, in turn, link to successful translation and the quality of translation (Sobhaninejad & Yoozbashi, 2008; Schmidt, 2005). That is why the present study approaches Emotional Intelligence from this point of view.

As Chen (2007) claimed, “it is unquestionable that the process of translation needs to engage in a great deal of decision-making activities” (Cited in Venuti, 2008). Considering the process of decision-making in translation as a particularly complex procedure, Willis suggested that the translator should pay attention to factors that lead to choices, rather than on the choices themselves (cited in Baker, 2001). There is also a general consensus among translation researchers that the decision-making process also plays a salient role in translators’ performance and the quality of their translation (Darwish, 1999). The decision-making process is, in turn, influenced by the behavior, psychological disposition (Schmidt, 2005), cognitive, emotional (Hansen, 2005) and individual characteristics (Coba, 2007; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007; Wilss, 1998; Karimnia & Mahjubi, 2013). Furthermore, “according to popular opinion and work-place testimonials, Emotional Intelligence increases performance and productivity” (Lam & Kirby, 2002).

Therefore, the necessity of investigating translators’ Emotional Intelligence is of great importance; For instance, Nassimi (2009) demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between EQ and the quality of children’s literature translation. Hence, it is good for students to know more about it during their courses because translators may come across texts in various genres like literature may be influenced by the EQ of the translator (cited in Shangarffam & Abolsaba, 2009).

A brief review of the literature indicates that Emotional Intelligence has proved to be correlated with successful task performance (Schutte, 2001). As certain career fields place a higher emphasize on Emotional Intelligence abilities than others, further research should focus on a specific Emotional Intelligence construct which successfully predicts translators’ job performance (Shipley et al., 2010).

To sum up, Emotional Intelligence is one of the factors that seem to affect the translator’s performance and his/her translation quality. Since Emotional Intelligence influence academic achievement (Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011), academic performance (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007; Shipley et al., 2010; Lam & Kirby, 2002, creativity (Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011; Lam & Kirby, 2002) and decision-related emotions (Sevdalis, 2007) as well as writing performance and understanding the perspectives of other people (Abdolrezapour, 2013), the importance of investigating its impact on translators and their translations is further highlighted.

Another main point which makes the present study significant is that there has been very little research in Translation Studies regarding the effect of translators’ Emotional Intelligence on their translation quality. Therefore, the focus of the present study is to investigate whether the translators’ Emotional Intelligence influence their translation quality.

This study was designed to seek answers to the following question:

Is there any significant relationship between translator's Emotional Intelligence and their translation quality?

Based on the aforementioned research questions, the following hypothesis was formulated:

There is a significant relationship between translator's Emotional Intelligence and their translation quality.

## 2. Review of literature

Although many fields of study have been working on this concept, Emotional Intelligence is a completely new topic in translation studies and there is very little research regarding the impact it exerts on translation quality. Taking into account the nature of translation, it seems that Emotional Intelligence may directly or indirectly influence the process and product of translation; however, in one study, Shangarffam & Abolsaba (2009) found thoroughly different findings. They provided evidence that there was not a significant relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and the quality of the translation among the students of translation studies. On the contrary, Hubscher-Davidson (2013) found that there was a difference between the trait Emotional Intelligence scores of literary and non-literary translators in terms of emotion regulation. Results are consistent with studies showing that people with higher EI are able to handle the affective nature of texts particularly well. Hubscher-Davidson (2013) maintained in order to gain a deeper understanding of translation and interpreting processes, it is both necessary and desirable to investigate translators’ emotional intelligence. As cited in Shangarffam and Abolsaba (2009), in Nassimi’s (2009) study, it was also demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between EQ and the quality of translation. Also, according to Pahlavani & Asroush (2013), the level of Emotional Intelligence might be one of the possible factors manipulating the translators’ mind. The result

showed there was a positive and significant relationship between the learners' EQ and their success in oral translation performance. In another study, Singureanu (2014) highlighted the importance of Emotional Intelligence in the work of interpreters. Singureanu found that an Emotionally Intelligent interpreter will not necessarily be a better interpreter but he/she would definitely be a more adjusted professional who inspires confidence and to some extent this could reflect on the level of success in his or her career. Singureanu (2014) further suggested that the first step would be to introduce Emotional Intelligence in academic courses or to incorporate it in the training of interpreters.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Design*

The design of this quantitative study was causal-comparative in nature. In this design, cause was identified as the translators' emotional intelligence, and its effect on the translation quality remained to be investigated.

#### *3.2 Instruments*

1) For measuring the participants' EQ, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue-SF) was used. This is a 30-item questionnaire designed to measure the individuals' Emotional Intelligence. It was designed and validated by Petrides & Furnham (2003).

2) Waddington's translation quality assessment model D was used to determine participants' translation quality. This model is designed and validated by Waddington (2001). Model D actually consists of combining error analysis and holistic methods of Waddington model in a proportion of 70/30, respectively.

#### *3.3 Participants*

The population under study was a group of professional translators, working in official and non-official translation centers, and freelance translators. For selection and homogeneity purposes, subjects were selected to be translators with 2-7 years of experience. Individuals with both Bachelors' and Masters' degrees in translation and those who have studied or lived abroad were excluded from the study to minimize the impact of their academic experience and proficiency level. 100 translators selected using purposive sampling method participated in the study.

#### *3.4 Data Collection Procedures*

First, the study participants answered the demographic questions; then they completed the *TEIQue-SF* questionnaire and the total EQ scores were computed. Then, the study participants were asked to complete a translation task in 30 minutes. The translations were assessed and scored based on Waddington's model D. To do so, a paragraph containing 246 words was given to be translated into Persian; the text was part of the Orwell's 1984 novel. The scores were entered in SPSS 21.0 for further statistical analysis.

#### *3.5 Data Analysis*

After data entry, the appropriate statistical analysis including descriptive statistics (Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to analyze demographic data; in order to investigate the research hypothesis, correlation statistical procedure was used.

### **4. Results**

#### *4.1 Reliability of the Measures*

The reliability of the measures and instruments was estimated as a preliminary step by Chronbach's alpha which supported the previous reliability findings of the instruments' developers. The Chronboch's alpha was estimated to be 0.86 for the translated version of Petrides and Furnham's TEIQue. The reliability of Waddington's model D was also calculated to be 0.82.

#### *4.2 Results of The Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Variables*

For selecting the correct statistical procedure in this study, the normality of the scores was initially checked which means that the scores on the dependent variable should normally distribute. The following normal Q-Q Plot showed that the distribution of scores was reasonably normal. Since the normality assumption was met, the tests used in this study were kind of parametric techniques.

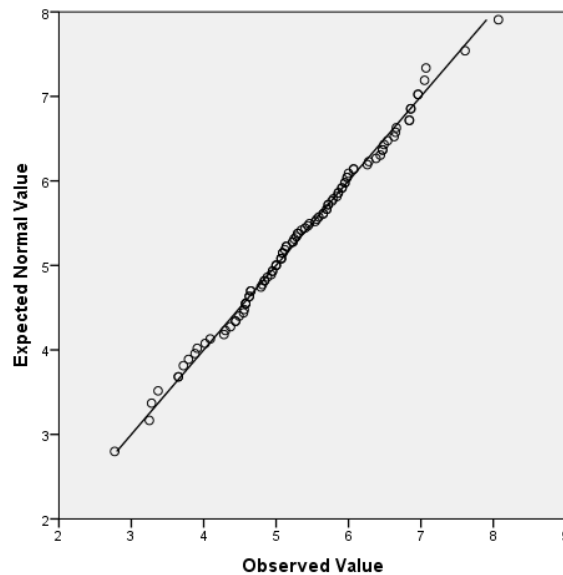


Figure 1. Q-Q plot for the normality of the scores

A total of 100 translators completed the questionnaires. The mean age of the participants was 28.2 years (SD 6.8). Table 1 summarizes the results of descriptive statistics of the variables.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables

	<b>workplace</b>	<b>gender</b>	<b>Academic experience</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>	<b>age</b>
<b>N</b>	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Mean</b>				4.0404	28.2828
<b>Std. Deviation</b>				1.95312	6.83036

Table 2 reveals the results of total EQ among the study participants in each group. Mean total EQ of the participants was 101.6 with and (SD 16.01).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of variables (Total EQ)

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Total EQ</b>	100	101.6	16.01

Tables 3 and 4 present the results of scoring the translations based on Waddington's model D which was used to assess the participants' translation quality.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables (Total score)

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Holistic</b>	100	5.2	1
<b>Objective</b>	100	5.4	1.2
<b>Total score</b>	100	5.3	0.9

Table 4. Mean and std. deviation of variables (Total score)

	N	Mean	SD
Total score	100	5.3	0.9

As explained in part 3, this scoring system makes use of two subjective (holistic) and objective (error analysis) scoring methods, respectively. According to table 3, mean holistic, objective and total score of participants was 5.2, 5.4 and 5.3 with (SD 1), (SD 1.2) and (SD 0.9). Mean total score was finally calculated to be 5.3 with (SD 0.9).

Table 5. Correlation between total EQ and total score

		TOTAL EQ	score
<b>TOTAL EQ</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	-.061
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.545
	N	100	100
<b>score</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.061	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.545	
	N	100	100

Table 5 reveals the results of correlation statistical procedure which was run to analyze the relationship between translators' EQ and their translation quality. According to this table, there is not a significant relationship between translators' EQ and their translation quality (sig 2-tailed= 0.54).

#### 4.2 Discussion

*Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between translator's Emotional Intelligence and their translation quality.*

The results of the correlation statistical procedure reveal that there is no significant relationship between translator's Emotional Intelligence and their translation quality ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study was rejected. This finding keeps the controversy over the impact of Emotional Intelligence on translation going as some other studies have claimed a significant relationship in this regard.

On the other hand, as explained before, translation is considered to be both a problem-solving and a decision-making process. From this perspective, Emotional Intelligence plays an indirect role which influences both translation process and translation product. One explanation for this finding could be that in the present study translators' total EQ was measured and used to analyze the data and its subscales were not investigated separately. Another explanation could be the way Emotional Intelligence is being investigated by the researchers. This gives an insight for further research projects with different research designs as the number of studies which have claimed to find a significant relationship is very limited.

#### 5. Conclusions

A brief review of the literature indicates that the translator's psychological conditions including his/her Emotional Intelligence may influence the translated text. As stated before, translation is also regarded as a problem-solving and decision-making process and Emotional Intelligence has been considered as a factor which contributes to performing such processes. A brief review of the literature indicates that in some studies, translators' Emotional Intelligence was found to affect the quality of the translation product, the process of translating and producing a good translation; while one study did not find a significant relationship between total Emotional Intelligence and translation quality Shangarffam and Abolsaba (2009). This is, of course, in agreement with the results of the present study. On the contrary, in another study, Hubscher-Davidson (2013) found that there is a difference between the trait Emotional Intelligence scores of literary and non-literary translators. As cited in Shangarffam and Abolsaba (2009), in Nassimi's (2009) study, it was also demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between EQ and the quality of translation. Furthermore, Pahlavani and Asroush (2013) and Singureanu (2014) highlighted the importance of Emotional Intelligence for success in oral

translation performance, too. Taking into account the results of the present study, although Emotional Intelligence did not have any relationship with the quality of translation, it is suggested that teachers and professors would better consider the concept of Emotional Intelligence in their teachings of translation materials; it seems that translation quality may be correlated with certain subscales of Emotional Intelligence and not with the total EQ, as some other studies have found statistically significant relationships, this, for sure, leaves the subject open to further research and discussion.

## 6. Implications

The conclusions drawn indicate that translation educators should not ignore the important role of their students' Emotional Intelligence in the act of translation since translation is both a problem-solving and a decision-making process and these processes are influenced by emotional intelligence. It is also recommended that the translation educational system develops a comprehensive curriculum for the benefit of all students with respect to their emotional intelligence. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will open new horizons for translation trainees and translation trainers, leading to a better insight into the role of individual differences in the act of translating.

## 7. Limitations of the study

Having acknowledged the limitations of this study, a number of limitations are listed below:

- 1) The first and main limitation of this study was lack of prior research studies on the topic especially on the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and translation quality.
- 2) Another limitation concerns the sample size and lack of available and/or reliable data and access to translators, which might be a significant obstacle in finding a trend and a meaningful relationship.
- 3) As translation quality assessment is still under research and under controversy, the rationale for using each model of quality assessment in translation is open to discussion or may be challenged as a factor to have been influencing the results of such studies.

## 8. Suggestions for future research

For those interested to conduct further studies pertinent to the theme of the present research, the following topics are suggested:

- 4) Further studies are suggested to broaden the horizon of whether and how Emotional Intelligence and translation problem-solving, translation decision-making and translation quality may influence each other as a way to make necessary pedagogical changes in the translation studies curricula and translator training programs.
- 5) Although the popular belief is that a high level of EI can predict success, it is suggested that further studies can investigate whether EI may enhance the quality of the tasks completed by translators.
- 6) Another suggestion would be to test the EI level of students at the beginning of the translation course and to correlate their academic results to their EI results and possibly with their IQ scores to verify the relevance of EI for task performance. A second stage of this project would be to follow up on these students after a certain period of time to see what their professional trajectory was and how well they had done in their careers.
- 7) Other studies could be done with the role of various demographic factors such as gender, age, and socioeconomic background, which may have influence on the quality of translation and their interaction with academic experience and Emotional Intelligence.

## Acknowledgments

This paper was extracted from a dissertation submitted for Master's degree in English Translation to the department of English, Marvdasht branch, Islamic Azad University in May 2015.

## References

- Abdolrezapour, P. (2013). The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and EFL Learners' Writing Performance. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 331-339. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.070>
- Baker, M., & Malmkjaer, K. (Ed.). (2001). *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. London: Routledge.
- Chen, Sh. (2007). Cultural Presupposition and Decision-Making in the Functional Approach to Translation. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 83-89.

- Coba, N. C. (2007). *The latina value scales: Translation and cultural adaptation*. Doctoral dissertation. University of New Jersey, New Brunswick.
- Darwish, A. (1999). Towards a theory of constraints in translation. Retrieved from [http://www.translocutions.com/translation/constraints o1.pdf](http://www.translocutions.com/translation/constraints%20of%20.pdf)
- Dongfeng, W., & Dan, S. (1999). Factors Influencing the Process of Translating. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 44(1), 78-100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/004616ar>
- Farahzad, F. (2003). Sequencing texts on the basis of difficulty in a translation programme. *Translation Studies*, 1(1), 31-44.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.
- Hansen, G. (2005). Experience and Emotion in Empirical Translation Research with Think-Aloud and Retrospection. *Meta: journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal*, 50(2), 511-521. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/010997ar>
- Hubscher-Davidson, S. (2013). Emotional Intelligence and Translation Studies: A New Bridge. *Meta: Translator's Journal*, 58(2), 324-46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/1024177ar>
- Hubscher-Davidson, S. E. (2007). An empirical investigation into the effects of personality on the performance of French to English student translators. *The Interpreter and Translator trainer*, 2, 277-279.
- Karimnia, A., & Mahjubi, M. (2013). Individual differences and quality of translation: a personality-based perspective. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, 17(1), 37-64. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/plc-2013-0003>
- Lam, L. T., & Kirby, Susan, L. (2002). Is Emotional Intelligence an Advantage? An Exploration of the Impact of Emotional and General Intelligence on Individual Performance. *Journal of social psychology*, 142(1), 133-143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224540209603891>
- Mavroveli, S., & Sánchez-Ruiz, M. (2011). Trait emotional intelligence influences on academic achievement and school behavior. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(1), 112-134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1348/2044-8279.002009>
- Murphy, K. R. (2006). *A critic of emotional intelligence: What are the problems and how can they be fixed*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Association.
- Pahlavani, P., & Asroush, M. H. (2013). The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and the EFL Learners' Oral Translation Performance.
- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2003). Trait emotional intelligence: Behavioural validation in two studies of emotion recognition and reactivity to mood induction. *European Journal of Personality*, 17, 39-57. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/per.466>
- Petrides, K. V., Furnham, A., & Mavroveli, S. (2007). Trait emotional intelligence: Moving forward in the field of EI. In G. Matthews, M. Zeidner & R. Roberts, R. (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence: Knowns and unknowns* (Series in Affective Science). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson, D. (1997). *Becoming a Translator*. London and New York: Routledge. [http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203441138\\_chapter\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203441138_chapter_1)
- Schutte, S. (2001). Emotional Intelligence and Task Performance. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 20(4), 114-135. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/J0X6-BHTG-KPV6-2UXX>
- Sevdalis, N., Petrides K. V., & Harvey, N. (2007). Trait emotional intelligence and decision-related emotions. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42, 1347-1358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.10.012>
- Shahraki, A., & Karimnia, A. (2011). Waddington's model of translation quality assessment: A critical inquiry. *Elixir Ling. & Trans*, 40, 5219-5224.
- Shangarffam, N., & Abolsaba, A. (2009). The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the Quality of Translation. *Journal of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Literature*, 1(2), 103-114.
- Shiple, N. L., Jackson, M. J., & Segrest, S. L. (2010). The effects of emotional intelligence, age, work experience, and academic performance. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 9, 1-18.

- Shojaee, F., & Sahragard, R. (2012). The Effect of Risk-Taking on Translation Quality of English Translation Students. The 10<sup>th</sup> International TELLSI Conference, Shahid Beheshti University, Mehr 25-28, 1391 (October 16-19).
- Singureanu, D. (2014). Interpreters and Emotional Intelligence. Retrieved from <http://www.iti.org.uk/>
- Sobhaninejad, M., & Yoozbashi, A. (2008). *Emotional intelligence and management in organization*. Tehran: Yastaroon Publications.
- Venuti, L. (2008). *The translation studies reader*. New York: Rutledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14781700701706393>
- Waddington, C. (2001). Different methods of evaluating student translations: The question of validity. In *Meta*, XLVI, 2, 311-325. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/004583ar>
- Wilss, W. (1998). Decision making in translation. In N. Baker & K. Malmkjaer (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 57-60). London: Routledge.

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).