The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the Quality of Translation

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ABSTRACT: In the course of reviewing the related literature Emotional Intelligence is a newly emerged issue in the area of language. Among other factors that might manipulate translators’ mind while producing a text, their EQ level might be an influential element. The present study is mainly concerned with investigating the relationship between EQ and translation. The researchers try to discover whether there is any significant relationship between translators’ EQ level and the quality of the translation they produce. To this end, a sample of 90 senior male and female students of BA and MA of English Translation Studies comprised the participants of the study. The participants received a package of two tests: a rendering and transferring test of translation and a Reuven Bar-On (1997) Emotional Intelligence test. The research question was attempted upon the scoring of the EQ test and evaluating the translations and the analysis of the data employing a correlational study. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between the level of EQ of translators and the quality of their translation.

Keywords: intelligence, emotional intelligence, accuracy in translation, appropriateness in translation

A thorough study of the history of translation uncovers that translation over the centuries, always as a meeting point of different cultures and civilizations, has been dynamically involved with an introduction of various perspectives on the path of enlightening and awakening nations around the world. This indicates that, translation, in fact, cannot be considered as an isolated and solitary mode of being as in Hatim and Mason’s (1997) words, translation is ‘an act of communication’ permanently dealing with at least two different languages along with a broad network of elements including cultural, historical, political, and ideological differences.

Undoubtedly, in the era of communication and dialogue among civilizations, translation occupies a crucial role in transferring different
ideas among different nations. Translation is a phenomenon that has a huge effect on everyday life. It has been seen as an art, craft, and science by various scholars during the history. According to Newmark (1988) “translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (p. 5).

The translator, of course, is a ‘special category of a communicator’ (Hatim & Mason, 1997) who more and more tries to closely interact with both source and target texts of all kinds, for the particular purposes and particular recipients and eventually to specific effect. The translator has his own feeling about language and his translation. This feeling consists of a ‘sixth sense’ (Newmark, 1988) but it is included of intelligence and sensitivity as well as knowledge. The combination of all these feelings comes into play in the task of translation.

Intelligence has always been a controversial issue among learning psychologists. Although there is a rich literature on intelligence and its relationship with language, there is no single best way to introduce the subject of human intellect. The introduction becomes difficult when one is confronted with various treatments of the notion of intelligence and intellectual development, and thus the notion plays a key role in contemporary psychology. Brown (1994) contends that “success in educational situations and in life in general seems to be correlated with high IQ” (p. 100). Intelligence has a multitude of definitions by various scholars, from intelligence as a unidimensional concept to intelligence as a multiple concept and last but not least to intelligence as an emotional notion. Goleman (1995) believes that “there is an intelligence based on emotion” (p. 23). Emotional Quotient (EQ) is defined as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swapping the ability to think, to emphasize, and to hope” (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). Although the term Emotional Intelligence is a new term which is developed in the 21st century, many scholars have worked on it, trying to define, describe, and measure it. The endeavor has not ended. Eventually, because of the practical needs of civilized societies, it becomes more urgent to find some ways to evaluate the emotional intelligence of individuals as accurately as possible, give them the appropriate guidelines to improve this intelligence and use it appropriately in everyday life. Emotional intelligence provides the bedrock for the development of a large number of competencies that help people perform more effectively.

One of the most significant manifestations of the success of translation studies has been the development of scientific approaches to training translators academically. Among so many factors contributing to the task of translation it seems that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in translation. There are lots of questions about why one translator succeeds,
but the other does not. Why two people with the same age and academic background are so different in their task of translation. No one can deny the role of strong memory, language competence, world knowledge, experience, and practice in the success of a translator. Recent studies (e.g. Murphy, 2006) make it obvious that translation has always gone hand in hand with so many factors, so that it should be studied along other fields, and it is not separate from them. One of the fields that can have a close relationship with translation is psychology. Psychology always seeks to identify, characterize, manage, and measure the different aspects of individuals. People use language to talk about events, memories, emotions, and sensations. They use language to inform other people of different cultures and different nationalities; and the main bridge between different languages is translation. By translation people around the world get information about different issues. Translation is a task that is done by individuals, so there can be a close relationship between translation and psychology. It is stated, “One of the recent studies in psychology is the study of intelligence and especially emotional intelligence which is considered as one of the most important dimensions of intelligence” (Murphy, 2006, p. 43).

If in the 20th century IQ has been considered as an important part of human intelligence, in accordance with growing evidence in the 21st century, an important part of human intelligence will be EQ. Theorists of emotional intelligence with psychological reasons have distinguished EQ from IQ (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). It is crucial to say that both EQ and IQ are the extension of ability not the ability itself. Theorists believe that “IQ tells us what we can do, however EQ tells us what we should do” (Hatch & Kornhaber, 2006, p. 63). IQ is composed of our ability for recognition, rational, and abstract thinking but EQ tells us how to use IQ for achieving success in our lives. EQ describes abilities distinct from, but complementary to academic intelligence, the purely cognitive capacities measured by IQ. Many people who are book-smart but lack EQ end up working for people who have lower IQs than them but who excel in EQ (Mayer, et al., 2002).

It seems that since 1983 following the work of Howard Gardner on Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory, new researches have been conducted in language studies. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no research up to now has been conducted to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and translation. It is evident that so many factors involve in the task of translation and translators differ from each other in many ways. One of the most important factors involving in translation is emotion. Emotions and being intelligent about them is an important factor in an individual, and presumably it can heavily affect the translation activities (Farahzad, 2003). Therefore, researchers and teachers
in the field are expected to do more research into the concept of emotional intelligence and apply the notion to the field to see how much it accounts for success in translating.

Although deep understanding and creative thinking are undoubtedly the prerequisites to translation, yet other factors can be influential in the success of the translators. However, the researchers in this study were concerned to investigate the relationship between EQ and translation. Therefore the present study sought to shed light on the relationship between emotional intelligence level of translators and the quality of their translation.

In keeping with the purpose of the study the following research question was raised:

Q: Is there a significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and the quality of English to Farsi translation of students of translation?

To probe the above question, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

H: There is no significant correlation between the emotional intelligence and the quality of English to Farsi translation of Iranian students of English translation.

Method
Design
The design of this research was ex post facto due to the nature of the research project which was looking for the relationship between the emotional intelligence of the translator and the quality of translation, hence the correlational nature of the study.

Participants
Participants who took part in this study were senior students of English translation at BA and MA levels. However, due to the lack of cooperation of some participants who did not fully cooperate and answer all the questions, the number of the participants decreased from 350 to 105. Considering the 15 participants who were randomly selected for the pilot study, the final number of participants in the full scale study was 90 BA and MA students. The participants were chosen from Islamic Azad University, Karaj and Central Tehran Branches. They were chosen from senior students because these students had an acceptable knowledge of translation theories as a result of their academic instructions; furthermore, these students had some experience in translation practice because they had passed the related courses of practical translation. Both female and male participants were included in the sample. Their age ranged between 19 and 30 years old.
In order to pursue the study and to investigate the hypothesis and get into proper conclusion, two sets of tests were applied: the rendering and transferring test of translation and the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i).

Bar-On EQ-i. To measure the EQ of the subjects, Bar-On EQ-i was used. The Bar-On EQ-i was originally designed in 1980 by Bar-On. It is a self-report scale including 133 items which measures five broad areas of skills or competencies and 15 factorial components. First is intrapersonal EQ (40 items), which is divided into emotional self-awareness (8 items), assertiveness (7 items), self-regard (9 items), self-actualization (9 items), and independence (7 items). Second is interpersonal EQ (29 items), which is divided into empathy (8 items), interpersonal relationship (11 items), and social responsibility (10 items). Third is adaptability EQ (26 items), which is divided into problem solving (8 items), reality testing (10 items), and flexibility (8 items). Fourth is stress management EQ (18 items), which is divided into stress tolerance (9 items) and impulse control (9 items). Fifth is general mood EQ (17 items), which is divided into happiness (9 items) and optimism (8 items) (Bar-On, 1997, pp. 43-45). However, 15 of the questions are associated with scales intended to assess response validity. These scales are the Omission Rate, Inconsistency Index, Positive Impression, and Negative Scales. The inventory takes approximately 40 minutes to complete. For the EQ-i high and low scores are identified by how distant they are from the mean score of 100. Scores exceeding the mean or falling below the mean by 1 SD (15 points) are considered to be within the normal range.

In view of the cultural differences and to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the content of the questionnaire the translated and adapted version was employed by the researchers. The translated version was proved to be accurate, valid, and effective through a research done by Pishghadam (2007).

Rendering and transferring Test. An English passage of 330 words was given to the participants to be translated into Persian. This text was selected from “Cambridge IELTS 3”. The participants were not responsible to translate the whole text, in fact the first three paragraphs were considered for participants to get a general overview of the text. The difficulty of the given text was measured by the researchers based on the Farahzad (2003) model according to which the text chosen was of medium difficulty. The participants looked up more than 15 words out of 330-word text with 10 sentences ranking it among texts with medium level of difficulty. To assess the lexical difficulty, the number of words/terms which
were thought to be difficult for the students, in terms of either comprehension or translation, and hence had to be looked up was estimated per 100 words of the text. If the number of such words was between 1 and 5, this part of the text was considered not usually difficult for the students. If it was between 5 and 10, the part usually was of medium difficulty, and if it was 10 or more, the part was difficult at the lexical level. To assess structural difficulty, the average number of sentences per 100 words of the text was estimated. The less the number of sentences, the more difficult that part of the text appeared to be at the structural level. If the number of the sentences was between 1 and 5, that part was rather difficult, between 5 and 10, it was of medium difficulty, and if 10 or more, it was rather easy.

**Procedure**

The following steps were taken to accomplish the purpose of the study during the research process:

**Piloting the translation test.** Since the problems of a test are usually projected during its administration and the researchers intend to fix them before starting the main study, as an undeclared type of pretest, the researchers gave the rendering and transferring test to 15 persons from among the BA participants and evaluated their translations according to the model of translation evaluation chosen to see whether the text satisfied the translation criterion by Waddington (2001). At this point three raters checked the translations and the researchers conducted an inter-rater reliability estimate and the average of the scores of the three raters was calculated. The subjects had no complains regarding the format and wording of the questions; also no questions seemed to be ambiguous to the subjects. The result of this piloting procedure was used as the preliminary data to support the designing of an immediate follow-up study to elucidate the relationship between the emotional intelligence level of the translators and the quality of their translation.

**Scoring procedure.** EQ questionnaires were scored based on the guidelines provided by Bar-On, Parker and James (1998), and then the total EQ scores and the scores of EQ’s five major subscales were computed. The rendering and transferring test was carried out in the classroom environment, and the participants were allowed to use dictionaries. The translation task was scored by one of the researchers and two other raters based on Waddington’s (2001) model of translation assessment. He proposes an objectified scoring based on error analysis and possible mistakes. The model proposed has three parts under the following headings:
1. Inappropriate renderings which affect understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: cotresens, fauxsens, nonsense, addition, omission, unresolved extra linguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation.

2. Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style

3. Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of source text.

(Adapted from Waddington, 2001, p. 313)

In the model, in each of the categories a distinction is made between serious errors and minor errors. Furthermore, it also proposes a fourth category which describes the plus point to be awarded for good or exceptionally good solutions to translation problems.

**Data Analysis**

To find the answer to the research questions and investigate the accuracy of the null hypothesis, the researchers had to analyze the data gathered. EQ questionnaires first were scored on the guidelines provided by Bar-On et al. (1998), and then the total EQ scores and the scores of EQ’s five major subscales were computed. The translation task was scored by one of the researchers and two other raters based on Waddington’s model of translation assessment. In order to obtain the best and most reliable answer from the scoring of the translations, the inter-rater reliability was computed between the raters and the average of all three sets of scores were calculated. With the translation and EQ scores in hand, the researchers calculated the correlation between these two factors to find whether there was any significant relationship between the emotional intelligence level of the translators and the quality of their translation. For correlating the data which was taken through different steps of this study and getting to the proper and useful conclusions the SPSS software version 11.0 was used.

**Results**

The Cronbach Alpha analysis of the piloting procedure demonstrated that the EQ questionnaire had a highly significant reliability index of 0.85 proving that a reliable questionnaire was used in the study. The pilot study also clarified that there was a significant correlation among the three raters the details of which are presented in Table 1.
As it is depicted in Table 1, the correlation coefficient between the scores of Rater 1 and 2 was 0.96, Rater 1 and 3 was 0.97, and finally Rater 2 and 3 was 0.96 which were all significant at the 0.01 level in a two-tailed test. Table 2 presents the descriptive data of the participants’ scores in EQ and rendering and translating test.

In order to investigate the null hypothesis, a correlational study was carried out between the two factors of the study, namely EQ and Translation scores. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of the correlation between the two in BA and MA students respectively.
Table 4. Correlation of the EQ Scores and Translation Scores of MA Students

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<tr>
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<th>MA-EQ</th>
<th>MA-TT</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.869</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
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As can be seen in the above two tables, the correlation coefficient of BA students’ EQ and translation scores turned out to be -0.009 and -0.030 for MA students. Notwithstanding the level of significance of 0.949 and 0.869 it is clear that none of the correlation coefficients was significant, thus, not providing enough grounds for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to discover whether there was a relationship between translators’ EQ level and the quality of the translation they produced. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, the research provided evidence that there was not a significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and the quality of the translation in BA and MA students of translation studies.

Although the findings of this study show that emotional intelligence does not have any relationship with the quality of translation, we suggest that to train more efficient translators, teachers and professors would better consider the concept of emotional intelligence in their teachings of translation materials. Translation is a task which is highly in connection with other fields. A translator should have good knowledge of other fields to perform a better job. Emotional intelligence is one of the recent studies in today’s psychology. It has proved to be correlated with successful task performance (Schutte, 2001) and successful management (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Various studies and observations (Sternberg, 1997; Goleman, 1995) have also demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between EQ and life satisfaction, social interaction, physical and psychological health and happiness. Arnold (1998) claims that EQ has great impacts on many careers like teaching English as a second language. 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 unlike the texts which were of neutral nature and did not belong to any specific genre in this study, translators may come across other texts in various genres which like literature may be influenced by the EQ of the translator. Therefore,
taking into account the fact that EQ is important in cognitive task performance, it is worth to consider it as one of the elements towards which the attention of translators should be turned.

**Conclusion**

Although the term Emotional Intelligence is a new term which is developed in the twenty first century, many scholars have made attempts to define and measure it. The endeavor is just beginning. Eventually, because of the practical needs of civilized societies, it becomes more urgent to find some ways to evaluate the emotional intelligence of individuals as accurately as possible, give them the appropriate guidelines to improve this intelligence and use it appropriately in everyday life. Emotional intelligence provides the bedrock for the development of a large number of competencies that help people perform more effectively. It is evident that so many factors involve in the task of translation and translators differ from each other in many ways. Emotions and being intelligent about them is an important factor in an individual. Therefore, researchers and teachers in the field of translation are expected to do more research into the concept of emotional intelligence and apply the notion to the field to see how much it accounts for success in translating. Due to the globalization and cosmopolitan demands and according to the discussions presented in this study, translation training is an immediate and urgent need for our society. Although the findings of this study show that emotional intelligence is not related to the quality of translation, here it is suggested that to train better and more aware translators, instructors can benefit from considering the concept of emotional intelligence in their teachings of translation materials. It can also be beneficial for students to know more about EQ. This study can be replicated in other settings like other universities, or with professional translators to see what kind of data can be obtained.

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References