

## Emotional Intelligence and EFL Students' Translation Ability

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Received: 2015.5.10

Revisions received: 2015.9.9

Accepted: 2015.11.16

### Abstract

Emotional Intelligence is a challenging topic in the area of language research. Among other factors that might manipulate translators' mind, their Emotional Intelligence level might be an influential element, too. The present research focused on examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and the students' translation ability. It was carried out among 59 translation students in the Payam-Noor University in Iran, Mazandaran. After homogenizing the sample, the sample size was reduced to 32. The participants were required to translate some paragraphs of the short story 'A rose for Emily' and answer the Bar-On EQ-I questionnaire (1997). The results indicated that there was no relationship between EQ and the learners' translation ability but some of the main subscales of emotional intelligence (i.e., problem solving, happiness, and flexibility) had statistically weak relationship with the learners' translation ability. The results also showed that the combination of EQ and gender were positively correlated.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Translation ability, Translation quality assessment

### Introduction

The area of translation has been under-researched and regarded as a problematic area. “One of the most difficult and problematic areas in the translation studies is the translation quality assessment” (Bassnett-McGuire, 1997, as cited in Nasimi, 2009, p. 3). “There is always lack of a comparative and applicable scale in translation studies in order to help both raters and critics to assess different genres of translation” (Nasimi, 2009, p. 5).

Many factors have affected the learners’ translation ability. No one can deny the role of strong memory, language competence, background knowledge, proficiency level, practical experience, and practice in the success of a translator (Nasimi, 2009). Different studies have indicated that the individual’s cognitive and psychological factors can affect his/her ability in fulfilling different tasks. Among these, emotional intelligence is one of the concepts which has shown different degrees of relationship with the individual’s learning skills. Murphy (2006) stated the study of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) was considered as one of the most important dimensions of intelligence. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002, as cited in Nasimi, 2009) stated, “EI is not innate talents but rather learned capabilities that must be worked on and developed to archive outstanding performance” (p. 3). The concept of EQ has been rooted in Thorndike’s idea of ‘social intelligence’ and Gardner’s ‘intrapersonal’ and ‘interpersonal’ intelligence and has attracted such an interest since its introduction by Salovey and Mayer during the last two decades (Nikepour, Farsani, Tajbakhsh, & Sadat Kiyae, 2011). As the researchers have become convinced of the importance and effect of EQ in the translator's success and performance, the need for research concerning EQ’s relationship with and impact on different skills and tasks becomes greater than ever.

Although, there are many studies conducted on the relationship between EQ and different language skills, few researches up to now have examined the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and translation. According to Goleman (1995, as cited in Yosefi & Saeidi, 2008), “Emotional Intelligence is much more important than academic intelligence in developing a well- rounded person, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the

determine factors of success, while 80 percent is related to other factors” (p. 135). In this regard, Goleman (1998, as cited in Afzalur, 2005) claims that:

Emotional Intelligence plays an increasingly important role at the highest levels of a company. When he compared star performers with average ones in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the difference in their profiles was attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities. (p. 2)

Therefore, “training in EI in the workplace can occur at all levels and several programs have found success in developing more Emotionally Intelligent work forces” (Nasimi, 2009, p. 4).

Many studies on EI have been done during the last two decades but few of them have dealt with interrelationship between EI and translation (Shangarffam and Abolsaba, 2009). Accordingly, this study was an attempt to examine the relationship between EQ and the learners' translation ability. The purpose of the study was primarily to consider if there is any significant relationship between EFL learners' Emotional Intelligence and their translation ability. Also, it was attempted to find out whether there is any significant relationship between the Emotional Intelligence subscales and the learners' translation ability. Finally, it was the researchers' concern to examine the possible interactional effect that the combination of gender and Emotional Intelligence might have on EFL learners' translation ability.

Thus, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' Emotional Intelligence and their translation ability?
2. Is there any significant relationship between the Emotional Intelligence subscales and EFL learners' translation ability?
3. Does the combination of gender and Emotional Intelligence have any interactional effect on EFL learners' translation ability?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

This study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the learners' translation ability. For this purpose,

the researchers have selected a sample of 59 EFL students who had passed their translation courses in Payam-Noor University. There were 30 females and 29 males students. The students' age range was between 22 and 40. In order to homogenize the sample, the TOEFL proficiency test (2003) was administered to all the participants and only the students whose TOEFL test scores were between 407 and 539 (1.5 standard deviation above and below the mean) were regarded in the study, reducing the sample size to 32, 16 females and 16 males.

### **Instrumentation**

In this study two instruments were used: EQ Questionnaire (Bar-On EQ-i model) and Waddington model of translation evaluation.

#### **EQ Questionnaire**

The Bar-On EQ-i model was used to investigate the sample's EQ level. According to Bar-On (1997), EQ is:

a self-report scale with 133 items measuring five broad areas of skills or competencies and 15 factorial components. The first area is intrapersonal EQ (40 items), including emotional self-awareness (8 items), assertiveness (7 items), Self-regard (9 item), self-actualization (9 items), and independence (7 items). The second is interpersonal EQ (29 items), consisting of empathy (8 items), interpersonal relationship (11 items), and social responsibility (10 items). The third is adaptability EQ (26 items), which encompasses problem solving (8 items), reality testing (10 items), and flexibility (8 items). The fourth is stress management EQ (18 items), which includes stress tolerance (9 items) and impulse control (9 items). The last area is general mood EQ (17 items), consisting of happiness (9 items) and optimism (8 items). (pp. 43)

Meanwhile, 15 of the questions are associated with scales intended to assess response validity. These scales include the Omission Rate, Inconsistency Index, Positive Impression, and Negative Impression. Subjects respond in a 5-point Likert scale continuum from 'Very seldom or

not true of me' to 'Very often or true of me' (Bar-On, 1997). "The EQ-I is suitable for individuals 17 years of age and older and takes approximately 40 minutes to complete" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 4). However, the researchers used a shorter form of this test that was customized for Iranian context by Dr. Samuee and FathiAshtiani. The test was reduced to 90 items and was in Persian. The total reliability of the questionnaire estimated by Cornbach's alpha was 0.93. It employed a five-points response scale ranging from 'I completely agree' to 'I completely disagree' (Shahmohammadi&Hasanzadeh, 2011).

### **Waddington model of translation evaluation**

According to Waddington (2001), his translation Quality Assessment (TQA) shows that almost all the contributions have been descriptive or theoretical and have centered mainly on the following themes:

- (i) Establishing the criteria for a "good translation" (Darbelnet 1977; Newmark 1991)
- (ii) The nature of translation errors:
  - Defining the nature of translation errors as opposed to language errors (Gouadec, 1989; House, 1981; Kussmaul, 1995; Nord, 1993).
  - Drawing up a catalogue of possible translation errors (Gouadec, 1981).
  - Establishing the relative, as opposed to absolute, nature of translation errors (Gouadec, 1989; Kussmaul, 1995; Pym, 1992; Williams, 1989).
  - The need to assess quality not only at the linguistic but also the pragmatic level (Hewson, 1995; Hatim& Mason, 1997; Kussmaul 1995; Nord 1996; Sager 1989; Williams 1989).
- (iii) Basing quality assessment on text linguistic analysis (House, 1981; Larose, 1989).
- (iv) Establishing various textual levels on a hierarchical basis and linking the importance of mistakes to these levels (Dancette, 1989; Larose, 1989).

- (v) Assessment based on the psycholinguistic theory of “scenes and frames” (Dancette, 1989; 1992; Bensoussan&Rosenhouse, 1994; Snell-Hornby, 1995). (pp. 311-312)

Waddington considered the validity of translation according to four methods:

Method A is taken from Hurtado (1995), it is based on error analysis, and possible mistakes are grouped under the following headings (Waddington, 2001):

- (i) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: countersense, fault sense, nonsense, addition, omission, unresolved extra linguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation (register, style, dialect, etc.) .
- (ii) Inappropriate renderings, which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style.
- (iii) Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the source text. (p. 313)

There are two kinds of errors in Waddington model, serious errors (–2 points) and minor errors (–1 point). There is a fourth category awarded for good (+1 point) or exceptionally good solutions (+2 points). For example, if a student gets a total of –66 points, his result would be calculated as follows:  $110 - 66 = 44 / 11 = 4$  (which fails to pass: the lowest pass mark is 5).

“Method B is also based on error analysis and designed to take into account the negative effect of errors on the overall quality of the translations” (Waddington, 2001, p. 314). Waddington (2001) mentioned that the corrector should determine each kind of mistake, a translation or a language mistake; if the mistake affects the transfer of meaning from the source to the target text, it is a translation mistake and penalized with –2 points. If it does not, it is a language error and penalized with – 1 point.

However, the corrector has to judge the importance of the negative effect of these errors on the translation in the case of translation errors.

According to Waddington (2001), the final mark for each translation is calculated in the same way as for Method A:

The examiner fixes a total number of positive points (in the case of method B, this was 85), then subtracts the total number of negative points from this figure, and finally divides the result by 8.5. For example, if a student is given 30 minus points, his total mark would be 6.5 (pass):  $85-30 = 55/8.5 = 6.5$ . (p. 314)

Method C is a holistic method of assessment. In addition to this, all three methods based their scales on the requirements of professional translation and were consequently of little use for judging the quality of translation into the foreign language. As a result, Waddington had to design the following holistic method. The scale is unitary and treats the translation competence as a whole, but requires the corrector to consider three different aspects of the translator's performance; this allows the corrector freedom to award the higher mark and the lower mark (Waddington, 2001).

"Method D consists of combining error analysis Method B and holistic Method C in a proportion of 70/30; that is to say, Method B accounts for 70% of the total result and Method C for the remaining 30%" (Waddington, 2001, p. 315).

### **Procedure**

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' EQ and their translation ability. The fifth page of an English novel "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner (1930) was chosen randomly to be translated by the participants. It included four paragraphs. First, the researchers administered a TOEFL test to 59 EFL learners and selected those students whose score on TOEFL test was between 407 and 539 based on the mean (473) and standard deviation (44). Then, the researchers asked the samples to translate the translation text during 90 minutes. They could use a dictionary. Because of the time limitation, the participants were requested to answer the EQ-I questionnaires within 40 minutes during the next session. They were also requested to write their personal information

like name, age, educational background, and gender on their questionnaires. They were explained that their test results were private and would be used only for research purposes. If they desired to know the results of their EQ, they could provide their email address on their answer sheets.

Then, three raters rated the students' translations based on Waddington's (2001) model of translation assessment. These raters had BA degree in English translation and had professionally worked in this field for seven years. In order to have more reliable scores, the inter-rater reliability was computed and the averages of all scores were calculated. The results of the EQ questionnaire and the average scores of the students were put into analysis by the Excel and SPSS softwares.

### **Design**

This study was a correlating – descriptive research. There were two variables, Emotional Intelligence (Independent Variable), and the learners' translation ability (Dependent Variable). In order to examine the research hypotheses, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the scores of EQ and the scores on translation test was calculated. Moreover, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was also applied to find out the relationship between Emotional Intelligence subscales and the learners' translation ability. Finally, to understand the effect of the combination of gender and Emotional Intelligence on the quality of the translation a One-way ANOVA Analysis was conducted.

### **Results**

There were three purposes in this study: First, it was tried to show if Emotional Intelligence has any significant relationship with the learners' translation ability. Second, it was attempted to find out if Emotional Intelligence subscales have any significant relationship with the learners' translation ability. Finally, it was the researchers' concern to examine if the interaction of gender and Emotional Intelligence had any effect on the learners' translation ability or not.

With regard to the first research question and to examine the relationship between translators' EQ and the quality of their translations, the Pearson

product-moment correlations analysis was applied to the data. Table 1 presents the results of this analysis:

*Table 1*  
*Correlation between EQ and the learners' translation ability*

Statistical index	N	r	Sig(2-Tailed)
EQ& learners' translation ability	32	0.34	0.053

According to above Table, the significant relationship between EQ and the learners' translation ability in Sig (2-tailed) with 0.05 alpha was calculated 0.053 and Pearson's  $r$  was 0.34.

In analyzing data based on Pearson product-moment correlation, the researchers should focus on Pearson's  $r$  and sig (2-tailed). If the Sig (2-Tailed) value is greater than 0.05, then there is no statistically significant correlation between the two variables, that is, increases or decreases in one variable do not significantly relate to increases or decreases in your second variable. If the Sig (2-Tailed) value is less than or equal to 0.05, then there is a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. Here, Since Sig (2-tailed) is more than 0.05; there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is confirmed and no significant correlation between EQ and the learners' translation ability ( $p > 0.05$ ) was determined.

In order to investigate the second research question concerning the significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence subscales and EFL learners' translation ability, another Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was carried out. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis :

Table 2  
*Correlation between EQ subscales and the learners' translation ability*

Statistical index	N	r	Sig (2-tailed)
Problem-solving	32	0.36	0.041
Happiness	32	0.35	0.048
Independence	32	0.27	0.127
Stress Tolerance	32	0.27	0.131
Self-actualization	32	0.277	0.124
Self-Awareness	32	0.32	0.066
Reality-Testing	32	0.31	0.076
Interpersonal Relationship	32	0.16	0.36
Optimism	32	0.27	0.128
Self-Regard	32	0.26	0.138
Impulse Control	32	0.10	0.58
Flexibility	32	0.36	0.038
Social- Responsibility	32	-0.016	0.92
Empathy	32	0.18	0.305
Assertiveness	32	0.37	0.036

As the Table shows among all the EQ subscales, only problem-solving (sig= 0.041 , r = 0.36.) , happiness (sig=0.048, r =0.35), flexibility (sig=0.038, r =0.36.), and assertiveness (sig=0.036, r =0.37) have significant relationship with the learners' translation ability because the Sig (2-Tailed) value is less than 0 .05 for these subscales. However, since the magnitude of r for all these factors is very low, the relationship between these subscales and EFL learners' translation ability is very weak.

To answer the third research question concerning the interactional effect of the combination of gender and Emotional Intelligence on EFL translation students' ability, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Tables 3 and 4 indicate the results:

Table 3  
ANOVA of independence variable Emotional Intelligence and Gender on translation ability

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7.947 <sup>a</sup>	5	1.589	2.025	.108
Intercept	1712.523	1	1712.523	2.182E3	.000
Emotional Intelligence	6.650	2	3.325	4.236	.026
Gender	.357	1	.357	.455	.506
Emotional Intelligence & gender	1.857	2	.929	1.183	.322
Error	20.408	26	.785		
Total	2057.200	32			
Corrected Total	28.355	31			

a. R Squared = .280 (Adjusted R Squared = .142)

Table 4  
Post-hoc analysis

Emotional Intelligence		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Tukey HSD	Low	Medium	-.7536	.34853	.097	-1.6196	.1125
		High	-1.1083*	.44298	.048	-2.2091	-.0076
	Medium	Low	.7536	.34853	.097	-.1125	1.6196
		High	-.3548	.43230	.694	-1.4290	.7195
	High	Low	1.1083*	.44298	.048	.0076	2.2091
		Medium	.3548	.43230	.694	-.7195	1.4290

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = .785.

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5 shows the significance and effectiveness of ANOVA of independent variables (gender & Emotional Intelligence) on dependence variable (learners' translation ability). According to this table, since Sig(2-tailed) is less than 0.05 (0.26), there is mean difference. However, Sig (2-tailed) of gender (0.506) and the combination of Emotional Intelligence and gender (0.32) is greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the combination of Emotional Intelligence and gender does not have any interactional effect on the EFL students' translation ability.

### **Discussion**

Emotional Intelligence is a newly-investigated concept in the twenty first century; many researchers tried to define, measure, and apply it in relation to some other traits. In fact, “Intelligence has always been a controversial issue among learning psychologists” (Shangerffam&Abolsaba, 2009, p. 104). Some studies have shown that Emotional Intelligence provides the bedrock for success and help people perform more effectively. Emotions and being intelligent about them is an important factor in an individual. It is evident that so many factors involve in the task of translation and translators (Shangerffam&Abolsaba, 2009).

The present study intended to investigate the effect of the Emotional Intelligence on EFL learners’ translation ability. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and the learners’ translation ability. However, among the EQ subscales, problem solving, happiness, flexibility, and assertiveness were positively correlated.

These findings, to a great extent, correspond with the findings of Shangerffam and Abolsaba (2009) that showed that Emotional Intelligence does not have any relationship with the learners’ translation ability. However, the results of the present study are opposed to the findings of other researchers such as Nasimi (2009), Motallebzadeh (2009), Rouhani (2008), and Ghaffari (2008) who believe that EQ has a meaningful relationship with the success of learners concerning children literature, reading comprehension, structural ability, and speaking ability. This contrast might be due to employing different methods for assessing EQ and the learners’ translation ability, different sampling procedures, or different random environmental factors. For instance, Motallebzade (2009) used Bar-On EI test as emotional quotient inventory and Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB, 2005) as a homogenizing test. The results of Motallebzade (2009) revealed there was a strong relationship between Emotional Intelligence and EFL learners’ reading comprehension and structural ability except for social responsibility and empathy subscales. Rouhani (2008) revealed that using cognitive-affective reading-based course for literary readings significantly improved the subjects’ emotional intelligence scores of the MSCEIT measure and empathy scores, but

significantly decreased their foreign language anxiety (FLCAS) scores. Nasimi (2009) applied Bar-On EI test as emotional quotient inventory and four methods for assessing translation based on House, Waddington, Schaffner, and Farahzad method.

Meanwhile, the present study investigated the interactional effect of the combination of Emotional Intelligence and gender on the learners' translation ability. As it was indicated, the combination of Emotional Intelligence and gender did not significantly affect on the learners' translation ability. These findings correspond with the findings of Naghavi and Redzuan (2011) and Afolabi (2013) who indicated that gender difference doesn't have any significant correlation with Emotional Intelligence and the combination of them has a negative effect on the learners' success in language learning.

As the findings of this study revealed, there was no significant correlation between EQ and the learners' translation ability. Moreover, the results indicated that there was a weak relationship between some EQ subscales (problem solving, happiness, flexibility, and assertiveness). Finally, it was concluded that that the combination of Emotional Intelligence and gender had no significant effect on the learners' translation ability.

Translators have to mediate effectively between cultures, to understand a client's expectation, and to communicate someone's message in a successfully. It is necessary for successful translators in today's globalised and competitive market to recognize other's feeling, and find ways to transfer these perspectives. Professional translator should learn to behave in more Emotionally Intelligent ways (Davidson, 2012). Therefore, the researchers have tried to investigate the effect of Emotional Intelligence on the quality of translation. The results of this research have the potential for the directors who hire translators to gain a clearer idea about translators' ability, to develop training program.

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### Appendix 1

The EQ-i Scales and what they assess (Bar-On , 2006, p. 21)

EQ-I Scales	The EI Competencies and Skills Assessed by Each Scale
intrapersonal:	Self-awareness and self-expression
Self-Regard	<i>To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself.</i>
Emotional Self-Awareness	<i>To be aware of and understand one's emotions.</i>
Assertiveness	<i>To effectively and constructively express one's emotions and oneself</i>
Independence	<i>To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others.</i>
Self-Actualization	<i>To strive to achieve personal goals and actualize one's potential.</i>
Interpersonal	Social awareness and interpersonal relationship:
Empathy	<i>To be aware of and understand how others feel.</i>
Social Responsibility	<i>To identify with one's social group and cooperate with others</i>
Interpersonal Relationship	<i>To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others.</i>
Stress Management	Emotional management and regulation:
Stress Tolerance	<i>To effectively and constructively manage emotions.</i>
Impulse Control	<i>To effectively and constructively control emotions.</i>
Adaptability	Change management:
Reality-Testing	<i>To objectively validate one's feelings and thinking with external reality</i>
Flexibility	<i>To adapt and adjust one's feelings and thinking to new situations.</i>
Problem-Solving	<i>To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature</i>
General Mood	Self-motivation:
Optimism	<i>To be positive and look at the brighter side of life.</i>
Happiness	<i>To feel content with oneself, others and life in general</i>

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### **Biodata**

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