

ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN INTERPRETING STUDENTS: POSSIBILITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Being defined as a concept which entails awareness of one's own and other people's emotions and ability to manage those emotions as well as to interpret them in various interpersonal engagements (Goleman, 1998), emotional intelligence (EI) is found to correlate with academic performance, especially with professions with an affective component, including translation and interpreting (Bontempo, 2009; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007). Relying on the results received from the bilateral project *Possibilities for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence as a Generic Competence in Translation and Interpreting Students* (Popovska et al. 2019: 263–276), this paper aims at exploring the possibilities for EI skills enhancement in interpreting students with a view to raising the awareness of the benefits of EI for both teachers and students and adopting new perspectives on career advancement. The results show that the development of EI skills in interpreting students is very important and provides an opportunity for teachers to gain an invaluable insight into the professional development of students and to get inspired to be more creative in improving teaching methodology.

Keywords: emotions, emotional intelligence, interpreting, enhancement, skills

ПОТТИКНУВАЊЕ НА ЕМОЦИОНАЛНАТА ИНТЕЛИГЕНЦИЈА НА СТУДЕНТИТЕ ПО ТОЛКУВАЊЕ: МОЖНОСТИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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Како концепт што ја вклучува свесноста за сопствените емоции и за емоциите на другите, како и можноста за управување со нив и нивно толкување во различни интерперсонални контексти (Goleman, 1998), емоционалната интелигенција (ЕИ) се доведува во релација со академското постигнување, особено кај професиите со афективна компонента, како што се толкувањето и преведувањето (Bontempo, 2009; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007). Потпирајќи се на резултатите добиени од билатералниот проект *Можносии за зајакнување на емоционалната интелигенција како генеричка компетенција на студентите по преведување и толкување* (Поповска и др., 2019: 263–276), целта на овој труд е да се истражат можностите за поттикнување на вештините на ЕИ кај студентите по толкување за да се подигне свеста за придобивките од ЕИ за наставниците и за студентите, како и да се прифатат нови перспективи за кариерно напредување. Резултатите покажуваат дека развојот на вештините за ЕИ на студентите по толкување е многу важен и им дава можност на професорите да добијат увид во професионалниот развој на студентите, инспирирајќи ги да бидат покреативни при подобрувањето на наставната методологија.

Клучни зборови: емоции, емоционална интелигенција, толкување, зајакнување, вештини

1 Introduction

As a phenomenon, emotions have always attracted human attention, especially the scientific thought. According to Salovey and Mayer (2004: 2), they are understood as “organized responses, crossing the boundaries of many psychological subsystems (...) which typically arise in response to an event, either internal or external, that has a positively or negatively valenced meaning for the individual”.

The term *emotional intelligence* (EI) first appeared in the eighties of the 20th century, as one of the seven types of intelligence defined by Gardner (1983). Later, Salovey and Mayer (1990: 189) developed the concept further and defined it as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. According to Goleman (1998), EI is to be thought of as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. Additionally, he elaborated an emotional competences framework, which relies on five important domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The EI is perceived as the potential to acquire these competences (ibid.). The concept of EI is universal and therefore it can be related to various aspects of human life.

2 EI and translation studies

EI is recognised as a significant construct to be explored in educational setting. Chinene and Mudadi (2024) explore EI of radiography students, Chinyere and Afeez (2022) investigate the EI ability level of electrical/electronic technology university students, Pop-Jordanova and Demerdzieva (2015) investigate whether the level of EI in students and health workers is satisfactory, while Pandey and Sharma (2024) conduct research on EI among Indian teachers and Wu (2023) explores the relationship between EI of school principals, psychological climate, and teacher motivation.

Lahodynskyi, Bohuslavets, Nitenko, Sablina, Viktorova and Yaremchuk (2023) examine the integrated system of developing the EI of the translator, while Cásedas, Funes, Ouellet and de Quesada (2003) examine the training of EI together with other transversal competences such as creativity, psychological stress and cultural intelligence. EI of translators and its impact on their final product has been the focus of some research. Varzande and Jadidi (2015) investigate the impact of translators’ EI on their translation quality, while Qiu (2023) examines the influence of translators’ anxiety and EI on their translation quality.

There are numerous studies which identify the relationship between EI and academic achievement (Jordan et al. 2002; Lam and Kirby 2002; Petrides and Frederiksen 2010). Students with higher levels of EI tend to be generally confident (ibid.) or score better in certain subjects (Mavroveli and Sánchez-Ruiz 2011); social science and art students have been found to have better scores in emotionality than technical students in general (Sánchez-Ruiz et al. 2010: 54). Higher EI suggests a greater impact on the academic achievement of students when dealing with intellectually demanding tasks (Petrides et al. 2004), whereas some studies (Ciarrochi et al. 2002; Mikolajczak et al. 2008, 2009) have shown a link between EI and the ability to cope with stress. Higher EI may also influence scholastic achievements of certain academic subjects that are considered to be affect-related (Petrides et al. 2004).

Translation and interpreting require a high level of language mastery, communication skills and cross-cultural communication; they entail dealing with stressful language-related situations and can therefore be considered as affect-related disciplines. All these findings imply that EI is also relevant to translation and interpreting studies. Furthermore, the European Commission Directorate-General for Translation refers to five areas of professional competences for translators: language and culture,

translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service delivery (EMT 2017). In reference to personal and interpersonal competences, professional translators should, among other things, be able to “plan and manage time, stress and workload, work in a team and in virtual, multicultural and multilingual environments, take account of and adapt to the organisational and physical ergonomics of the working environment and continuously self-evaluate, update and develop competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning” (EMT 2017: 10). According to the National Occupational Standards in Translation 2007 (CILT 2007), translators and interpreters should reflect the meaning of the source text accurately in the translated text, possess the necessary interpersonal skills and competences for establishing and maintaining communication with clients, translation and interpreting agencies and fellow translators and interpreters (ibid.). All the necessary skills and competences mentioned can be related to EI.

Being able to understand personal and other people’s emotions as well as to manage and respond to them properly is as important for translators and interpreters as language mastery skills and other technical competences (Popovska et al. 2019: 265). Since EI is to be regarded as an important aspect of the translation and interpreting profession, it is very useful to investigate it in the translation and interpreting context. Numerous studies demonstrate the significance of this link. For example, interpreters themselves can be affected by the emotional distress of their clients and although some maintain an emotional distance, many still show empathy and compassion, which play an important role in the interpreting process (Davidović 2016: 77–80). In addition, successful signed language interpreters tend to be conscientious and emotionally adjusted individuals (Bontempo 2009); self-perceived intuition and emotional traits were found to impact positively translation performance, suggesting that successful and creative literary translators might also be distinctly intuitive and emotionally intelligent (Hubscher-Davidson 2007).

Bearing in mind that EI is an important competence for translators and interpreters, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the relationship between these two fields. This paper outlines the possibilities for EI skills enhancement in interpreting students relying on the results received from the bilateral project “*Possibilities for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence as a Generic Competence in Translation and Interpreting Students*” (Popovska et al. 2019: 263–276). The scope of the project was broader and included both translation and interpreting students, while the paper focuses only on interpreting students. The aim is to raise awareness of the benefits of EI for both teachers and students and to offer new perspectives on career advancement.

3 Methodology and research

To investigate the ways in which EI could be enhanced in translation and interpreting students with a view to improving the curricula and ensuring better professional development prospects, a project named *Possibilities for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence as a Generic Competence in Translation and Interpreting Students* was carried out in the period between 2016 and 2018. It was a bilateral project that included cooperation between the Translation and Interpreting Department at the Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, and the Department of Translation Studies at the Karl Franz University of Graz, Republic of Austria. The project was conceived of as an action research project which includes planning, observing and reflecting on strategies that help teachers investigate ways in which they can improve their teaching and contribute to educational and social change (Altrichter and Posch 2007). It was carried out by translation and interpreting teachers from the partner universities and funded by Macedonian and Austrian Ministries of Education.

Relying on Goleman's theoretical framework, which defines interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies (Goleman 1998, 2006), the project participants developed several different activities and methods for EI enhancement. The activities were tested during different translation and interpreting courses. Students evaluated the relevance of the activities to the aim they were supposed to achieve. The students' answers and the results obtained from the research were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively and the project team exchanged opinions, experiences, and reports including detailed curricula for the courses as well as students' evaluation descriptions. The data were used as a basis for adopting new approaches to teaching translation and interpreting focusing on boosting EI in students.

The aim of the project was to explore possibilities for implementing EI enhancement techniques within translation and interpreting courses for BA students. The survey aimed at raising awareness of how important emotions are for the teaching process and for the professional development of both teachers and students. Not only do the results of this project have an impact on translation and interpreting professionals, but they also have a positive impact on the wider social context in which these professionals act. Apart from improving the quality of translation and interpreting education process, the project is beneficial for translators and interpreters' personal well-being and encourages sound communication within the wider community.

This paper focuses on exploring possibilities of EI skills enhancement in interpreting students in the Liaison Interpreting, Consecutive Interpreting and Simultaneous Interpreting courses taught at the Department of Translation and Interpreting at the Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology in Skopje. The Liaison Interpreting course is part of the interpreting curriculum (English to Macedonian and vice-versa) and it is taught to second year BA students who have already taken three semesters of English language courses. The course is designed to introduce the basics of interpreting to students and to make them familiar with necessary skills and competences needed for the profession. The course focuses on: 1) explaining the concept of liaison interpreting, its scope and mode of practice and settings; 2) interpreters' code of ethics; 3) developing specific professional skills and competences and 4) simulating real life situations in which interpreters work. This is achieved through practical exercises for mastering the necessary skills and through performing role-plays intended to bring future interpreters closer to the challenges of their profession. The Consecutive Interpreting course is part of the interpreting curriculum (English to Macedonian and vice-versa) and is taught to third year BA students. The course focuses on active listening (understanding) of the speech, analysing the speech, and reproduction (rendition), as well as training for boosting memory, focus, and vocabulary, note taking techniques, speech rendition, visualization, prediction, chunking, stress-management, etc. The Simultaneous Interpreting course is part of the interpreting curriculum (English to Macedonian and vice-versa) and is taught to fourth year BA students. The course focuses on further development of the skills acquired during the Consecutive interpreting course as well as to time lag, anticipation, chunking, etc.

In order to relate EI to the context of interpreting, at the beginning of the course students were given an EI Awareness Questionnaire, which was devised by the project team and was supposed to determine whether the students were already familiar with the concept of EI and how they came into contact with it; then they were asked to complete the DISC Test (Personality Profile Test) to identify the degree to which different characteristics or behaviours describe them in close relationships. Additionally, they took the EI Questionnaire (NHS), which was supposed to get them thinking about various aspects of EI. The EI Questionnaire assesses emotional competences (self-awareness, managing emotions, motivation, empathy and social skills) based on Goleman's framework for interpersonal and intrapersonal competences (Goleman 1998, 2006). It was administered to provide information on the students' general knowledge of EI and about their level of EI competences, which

was later to be used as a basis for devising and implementing suitable teaching methodology for EI enhancement in the interpreting classroom.

Throughout the course, emphasis was put on the specificities of liaison and consecutive interpreting through practical exercises, watching videos and performing role-plays (Lee and Buzo 2009). The students were subject to continuous evaluation, self-evaluation and peer-evaluation and they shared experiences and advice, discussed situations and terminology and exchanged opinions among themselves as well as with senior colleagues. The methodology for developing specific professional skills and competences was upgraded with the EI boosting activities found in *Section 1 (Emotional well-being)* of the book *Future Directions* by Diane Carrington and Helen Whitten (Carrington and Whitten 2005). The book offers young people skills and strategies to develop emotional well-being and an understanding of the behaviours required to manage adult life (ibid, 5). It focuses on some very important aspects of EI which are also crucial for the interpreting profession, such as the power of the brain, memory, stress management, self-confidence, potential development, communication skills, code of ethics etc. The approaches and strategies for developing these aspects were discussed and they were adapted to the needs of the profession to help the students use them to their own advantage and raise their awareness of what being a professional interpreter really means. This was achieved through exercises and practices based on activities proposed in the book, which were specifically adapted to the students' needs.

At the end of the class, students completed an After-Class Questionnaire, in which they were supposed to provide feedback evaluating the classes, their content and relevance to their needs. Additionally, they were expected to answer questions related to EI competences being developed during the classes (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social skills and motivation) to rate their own performance, give remarks and make suggestions.

4 Results and discussion

The results from the first questionnaire distributed to the students (EI Awareness Questionnaire) show that 17 out of 18 students (94%) had already been familiar with the concept of EI. Only 1 student answered this question negatively (6%) (See Chart 1).

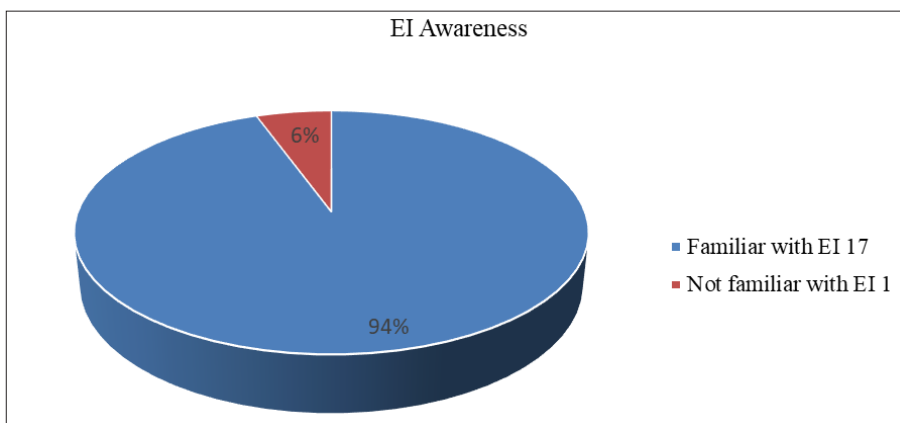


Chart 1. Results from the EI Awareness Questionnaire

The results from the DISC Test revealed the degree to which different characteristics or behaviours describe students in close relationships. It can be noticed that most of the traits iden-

tified range from strong to needing attention. No characteristics needing development priority were identified. The results from the DISC Test are given below in Table 1.

Table 1. Results from the DISC Test

Personality profile				
Student	Dominant	Influent	Steady	Conscientious
1	33	23	42	35
2	40	36	47	43
3	34	32	41	42
4	35	43	35	30
5	47	37	28	39
6	44	49	34	39
7	41	28	23	27
8	39	45	43	36
9	47	51	45	38
10	31	32	39	25
11	34	33	33	28
12	33	32	28	37
13	32	41	30	18
14	51	55	25	39
15	38	32	36	39
16	35	33	32	37
17	32	45	46	21
18	38	36	36	27
Strength		35-50		
Needing attention		18-34		
Development priority		10-17		

The results from the EI Questionnaire show that when it comes to measuring to what extent different EI competences apply to students, self-awareness is measured to be a strength in all 18 students (100%), while it was noticed that other competences need attention; 15 out of 18 students have empathy as a strength (83.44%), social skills are found to be a strength in 14 out of 18 students (77.78%), while their weakest competences are managing emotions and motivation, which are found to be a strength in only 10 out of 18 students (55.46%). Managing emotions is a development priority for 1 out of 18 students (5.56%). The results from the EI Questionnaire are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Results from the EI Questionnaire

EI Questionnaire					
Self-awareness	Managing emotions	Motivating oneself	Empathy	Social Skills	
35	35	27	40	34	
35	39	30	35	25	
40	28	31	35	35	
40	22	34	32	40	
44	36	43	39	38	
38	27	33	38	38	
41	17	23	37	39	
42	36	37	41	39	
36	26	25	39	42	
45	40	36	48	41	
46	32	40	42	27	
42	21	38	34	41	
41	37	34	34	30	
37	36	41	35	31	
39	31	38	36	42	
48	40	37	48	35	
46	38	38	43	44	
46	37	36	41	35	
Strength		35-50			
Needing attention		18-34			
Development priority		10-17			

EI Questionnaire					
	Self-awareness	Managing emotions	Motivating oneself	Empathy	Social Skills
Strength	18	10	10	15	14
Needing attention	0	7	8	3	4
Development priority	0	1	0	0	0
Total	18	18	18	18	18

EI Questionnaire					
	Self-awareness	Managing emotions	Motivating oneself	Empathy	Social Skills
Strength	100%	55.56%	55.56%	83.33%	77.78%
Needing attention	0%	38.89%	44.44%	16.67%	22.22%
Development priority	0%	5.56%	0%	0%	0%

With regard to the results from the After-Class Questionnaires, the feedback on content related questions indicates that the most tackled skills during the Liaison Interpreting course were listening and speaking. In most cases, students were already familiar with the content/topic introduced in class, but at the same time most of them found it useful and informative. Most of them liked the content of the classes and considered it relevant and beneficial. Considering the language skills, they generally agreed that the classes were successful and instructive.

Listening and speaking were also the most tackled skills during the Consecutive Interpreting course. However, unlike the respondents in the Liaison Interpreting course, the content was new to them, especially the vocabulary. Most of them found the content useful and informative and most of them liked the content of the classes and considered it relevant and beneficial.

With reference to the EI competences related questions, most of the students found the atmosphere in the classroom to be interesting, relaxed and fun, whereas some of them rated it as challenging and intimidating. With regard to their feelings during the classes, most of them answered they felt optimistic (88.2%), self-confident (86.8%), compassionate (85.3%) towards other colleagues, enthusiastic (80.9%), empathetic (77.9%), relaxed (77.9%), and building bonds (73.5%) with other colleagues, while some of the students felt confronted with others (27.9%), not OK but managed to control their emotions (23.5%), and intimidated (14.7%). A considerable number of students felt to be influential (51.5%) and resolving conflict (41.2%). When it comes to motivation, most of them felt encouraged in the classroom (94.1%), while only 4.4% were discouraged during the classes. These results are given in Chart 2.

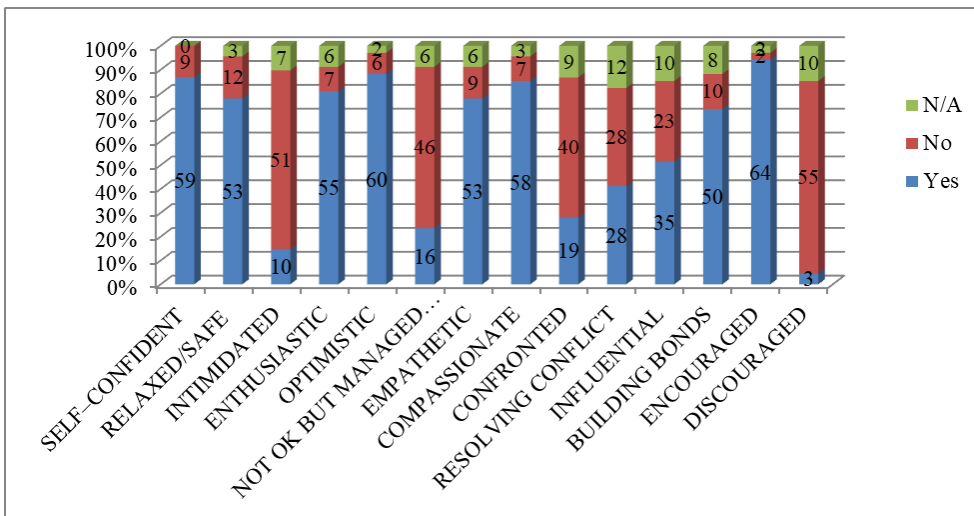


Chart 2. Results from the EI Competences Related Questions

With reference to their suggestions for overcoming negative or unpleasant feelings during the classes, a considerable number of students answered that they had not experienced any negative or unpleasant feelings, while those who did suggested that they should mostly focus on boosting self-confidence and developing stress management strategies as well as improving memory and working harder in the future.

4.1 Advantages and limitations

Regarding the advantages of implementing EI boosting strategies within the Liaison Interpreting and Consecutive Interpreting courses, it appears that most of the essential EI aspects, such as the power of the brain, memory, stress management, self-confidence, potential development, communication skills, conflict resolution etc., are crucial for interpreters. It is possible and relatively easy to relate EI to the interpreting profession. As a result, the exercises and activities for stimulating EI in students based on Carrington and Whitten's methodology were easily applied in the classes after they had been adapted to the students' needs. They could be very inspiring for teachers since they can provide them with an opportunity to be creative, devise tailor-made practical exercises and develop their own methodology suitable for interpreting students.

Furthermore, discussions and sharing experiences in class provide the teachers with an opportunity to monitor students' progress. This might serve as motivation since the teachers can immediately see the results of their efforts to implement EI in interpreting settings. This is beneficial for the students as well because it can boost their self-confidence and self-awareness.

Ultimately, what seems to be the most important advantage of implementing EI strengthening techniques in the educational process is that not only is it useful for professional advancement, but it can also help students in everyday life to cope with various (challenging) situations and to improve their communication with other people in general in different settings.

However, throughout the implementation the EI methodology within the Liaison Interpreting course, certain drawbacks were perceived. Since the duration of the course is 1 semester with only 2 classes per week, the number of classes was insufficient to implement all the useful EI enhancing techniques, resulting in teachers having to focus on many different exercises during the class. This could be confusing as well as exhausting for both teachers and students, who felt the pressure of having to acquire many different skills and competences in one class. Additionally, they had to fill in an After-Class Questionnaire at the end of each class, which might have been stressful and too much of a burden for them. It might also cause loss of interest in the primary aim of the course.

Another limitation is the relatively small number of students who took part in the survey since very few of them choose interpreting as their future profession. This might call into question the reliability and the relevance of the results obtained. Furthermore, the answers provided by the students might be subjective since they reflect their personal opinions and beliefs. Another important drawback is the inability to measure the EI quotient in students quantitatively, bearing in mind that there are no standardized EI tests. This makes it difficult to obtain more reliable results as to whether the students actually managed to improve some of their EI competences. These insights call for further research into the relationship between interpreting and EI.

However, it should be noted that this project is a pioneering work when it comes to exploring EI in translation studies not only in our country but worldwide as well. The results obtained in the survey should serve as a starting point for further, more comprehensive surveys in this field adopting multidisciplinary approaches.

5 Conclusion

Since EI competences are relevant for the interpreting profession, it is useful to investigate the possibilities of developing them in the interpreting classroom and to explore ways in which they can be enhanced in future interpreters. Additionally, this paper offers the opportunity to adopt new approaches to teaching interpretation and raises awareness of how important EI is in

education. It encourages professional development in both teachers and students. Not only do the results affect interpreting professionals positively, but they also have an influence on wider social contexts. Furthermore, developing EI in interpreters promotes their personal well-being and encourages sound communication within the wider community.

Regardless of whether the students were already familiar with EI or not, the survey shows that they feel it is important for them and that it is worth trying to improve it. During the survey, they had the opportunity to get to know themselves better by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses in relation to different EI competences and they also became aware of what they need to improve. Furthermore, the EI boosting strategies used in class helped them understand their colleagues' feelings better and learn how to interpret them and deal with negative emotions more effectively. This can be beneficial in challenges situations in the profession. Moreover, it offers a unique opportunity for the teachers to get an invaluable insight into the professional development of their students and inspires them to be more creative when it comes to improving their teaching methodology.

Despite the limitations of the survey, this project should be understood as an innovative work in the field of translation studies since the relationship between EI and translation studies has seldom been investigated. It offers new perspectives on how these two could be further explored. This is crucial since boosting EI in interpreters can make them better professionals.

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