

TRANSÜD – Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis
des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens



Ressourcen und Instrumente der translationsrelevanten Hochschuldidaktik

Resources and Tools for T&I Education

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Fostering Emotional Intelligence as a Generic Competence in Translation and Interpreting Students: Overall Results of the Project in Skopje

EI activities were used in a wide variety of modules. To establish whether students were familiar with the concept of EI, all the students that were to take part in the project, that is to say, all students attending second, third and fourth-year courses at the T&I Department in the academic year of 2016/2017, were asked to fill in the **EI Awareness Questionnaire** and an **Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire** (developed by the NHS Leadership Academy's Emotional Intelligence questionnaire and freely available at https://www.londonleadingforhealth.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Emotional_intelligence_questionnaire-LAL1.pdf).

The results from the **EI Awareness Questionnaire** showed that some students had heard of EI before; however, irrespective of whether the students were familiar with the concept or not, most thought EI was important and worth finding out more about. The data from the **Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire** revealed that most students had strong self-awareness (94%), whereas managing emotions was the competence that they felt needed most attention (51%).

Over the course of the two semesters in which the EI activities were incorporated into classroom practice (summer semesters 2016/17 and 2017/18), the students regularly filled in the **After-class Questionnaire** which was designed by the Macedonian team. The Questionnaire asked students to assess the usefulness of the EI-related activity they had just completed and to indicate which EI skills they had been able to develop through the activity. In addition, they were encouraged to comment on the emotions they experienced during class.

The results were as follows:

- 98% of the students thought the implemented EI activities were useful, and 90% of them felt interested during class.

- The feelings they experienced during class ranged from feeling encouraged (91%), relaxed/safe (89%), enthusiastic (86%), self-confident (84%), to not intimidated (62%) and compassionate (57%).
- Concerning the EI skills that were supported by the different activities during class, the data showed that the activities had the biggest impact on students' intrapersonal skills, such as self-confidence (77%), recognising own strengths and weaknesses (88%), and self-motivation (83%). The students also indicated that they had been able to improve their interpersonal skills. Empathy, teamwork and building bonds were mentioned frequently, with percentages ranging between 50% and 70%.

The results of this project show that EI-enhancing activities are relevant for T&I students. Translators and interpreters need good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market. If they know how to ensure their own well-being, they will find it easier to develop healthy relationships with all the other actors within their field.

EI Activities for T&I Students

One problem with the incorporation of EI activities into class is that many teachers feel that these take up too much of the already limited class time they have available, which, they argue, could be more profitably used for content-related practice. In this section, therefore, we present some activities that were used in a variety of modules both in the BA and MA programmes in Graz. They were easy to integrate and allowed us to address specific problems. We also briefly describe the assessment instruments that were employed and summarise the questionnaire results and students' comments.

In Graz, it was decided that quantitative data should be compiled by all team members for the **EI Awareness Questionnaire** but not for the other assessment instruments. What motivated this decision was, firstly, the limitations associated with self-reporting referred to above. The other reason was that several of our students attended two or even more modules where EI activities were trialled. This, it was felt, was going to render invalid even tentative conclusions as to a possible causal link between students' reported improvements and the EI activities in a given course. For the same reason, we also asked the students to fill in the **EI Questionnaire** at home and use the results for the preparation of their **Personal Development Plan**. In the plan, they could indicate the areas that needed attention, their goals, possible evidence that might suggest that they had been able to improve, any detractions that could prevent growth, and details on what next steps they were planning to take, focusing on necessary resources including who could provide support or coaching.

Feedback on the usefulness of the activities and topics was most often collected in a **final oral feedback round**. In two modules, a **Final Questionnaire** developed by Delia Pagano was used. Aside from questions related to which EI activities and themes had been particularly relevant for them and what areas should be dealt with in more detail, the students were also asked how they felt EI could best be incorporated in T&I teaching. In one class, which was taught by Fiona Begley,

the students were asked to keep an online **EI journal** and share it with her. At the end of the course, the students were asked to look back over their entries and comment on whether and in what way they felt they had been able to develop their EI skills.

Activities

Learner / Teacher expectations

Although our students are, for the most part, goal-driven adults, many adopt a very passive attitude in the classroom and expect teachers to tell them what to do. To address this issue, Exercise 5.6 in Mortiboys (2005) was used to kick-start a discussion of teachers' and their own course expectations. In the subsequent plenary discussion, the students commented on what impact conflicting expectations might have on the classroom atmosphere and their learning progress.

Giving Effective Feedback in Interpreting Classes

In interpreting classes, students often feel very vulnerable as they are constantly being observed and assessed, not only by their teachers but also by their peers. Effective feedback is crucial if students are to derive maximum benefit from the classes and independent practice outside class.

To help students develop strategies for giving, and accepting, feedback, students were first asked to brainstorm and identify the features of effective feedback. These contributions were used for the development of guidelines for feedback which were subsequently applied in all interpreting sessions.

Feedback and Praise Needs

Many translation students feel that teachers' feedback on their translations is exclusively negative and that they never receive praise for good solutions, which leaves them frustrated and demotivated. This activity made them aware of their response to positive and negative criticism as well as their 'praise needs'.

Before a session in which general feedback on a translation task was given, the teacher asked one group of students, whose translation had been very good, if they could be made the target for very harsh and unfair criticism. After two minutes of often very personal attacks on the students, the class was told that they had

actually been watching a staged scenario. The students were then asked to reflect on their feelings as they were listening to the teacher's harangue and discuss the role of feedback and praise in supporting motivation with other students. Finally, it was suggested that they should describe what kind of feedback they would like to receive and agree guidelines with the teacher, taking into account also what is feasible (i.e. that few teacher comments on a student's translation indicate that the submitted work is very good, even in the absence of explicit praise).

Peer-Feedback as a Give-and-Take Process

While most students greatly appreciate feedback from their peers they are often hesitant to give feedback themselves as they fear their criticism might be too harsh and upset their peers. Feedback is, therefore, often very superficial and general (see also Pagano 2017). This exercise can help them develop their feedback skills, and raise their self-awareness and emotional self-regulation.

Drawing on Neale, Spencer-Arnell and Wilson (2011:95-100), the concept of "positive and negative stroke" as defined in Transactional Analysis was introduced to encourage a discussion of "good and bad feedback experiences" and "feedback styles" as well as various goals of feedback. After identifying different feedback categories, the students were given guidelines which suggested items for feedback and some 'golden rules' for the formulation of constructive criticism. Finally, Neale, Spencer-Arnell and Wilson's description of feedback as a give-and-take process (2011:95) was introduced.

In a subsequent activity, the students worked in groups of three: one acted as the giver of feedback, one as the recipient and one as an observer who noted down the feedback-giver's comments. The recipients were asked to note down how they felt during the feedback and what comments they recalled. The recipient's notes were then compared with the observer's notes; often, these were markedly different. This helped the students understand that their perception and interpretation of feedback was frequently coloured by their own feelings and expectations.

Acting Confident

Many students feel uncomfortable when they have to talk in front of the class. Based on Exercises 4:2 and 4:3 in Carrington/Whitten (2005), this activity sought to help them overcome their discomfort.

After a brainstorming session in which the students discussed factors that reveal confidence or lack of confidence, such as clothes, voice, body language, posture, the way others treat them, and so forth, the students demonstrated in groups how they looked and felt when they were confident. They were then encouraged to adopt this demeanour in the subsequent interpreting or presentation task. Afterwards, the observing students were asked to comment on the performances of the interpreters and presenters, who were also asked whether they felt had been able to remember the advice. If necessary, scenarios were re-enacted to provide opportunities for further practice.

An alternative variant is to ask students to first identify the hallmarks of confident demeanour in a politician, journalist, actor or actress or teacher and then try to emulate and act out their behaviours. The performative nature of this activity and its theatrical resonances proved particularly effective in encouraging shy and quiet students.

Managing Stress

As was noted above, stress is a major cause of ill health. To help students identify the causes of stress and develop stress management strategies, this activity was developed based on Exercises 5:1, 6:1, 6:2, 6:2:1 and 6:2:2 in Carrington/Whitten (2005).

First, the students discussed in groups what stresses them. Next, they were shown a PowerPoint presentation with illustrations from Carrington/Whitten showing the effects of long-term stress. The students were also reminded that stress is caused by a person's feeling that they are unable to cope with the demands of the situation and not the situation itself. In groups, the students then discussed their worst stressors, what tasks they generally completed very quickly and which they liked to postpone, and what was important to them, that is to say, whether they prioritised study, leisure or relationships, and how these different demands could cause them stress. The subsequent plenary discussion focused on their ways of dealing with stress factors which could not be changed, such as deadlines, exams, and so on, and possible ways of 'reframing' these challenges, in other words, 'deadlines help me with time management', 'exams allow me to show what I'm able to do', 'seminar papers give me new insights and allow me to hone my writing skills'.

For the interpreting students, a follow-up session was designed in which they were introduced to Dean and Pollard's **Demand-Control Scheme (DCS)** (Dean/Pollard 2013) and asked to identify stressors (demands) and solutions (controls) in some typical dialogue Interpreting settings. Some stressful sequences were acted out in class to allow students to 'feel' the impact of different strategies. Throughout the semester, **DCS** and **EI**-related aspects were discussed before each interpreting task, after it or both.

Helpful Coaching

While students often ask their peers for advice on specific study-related matters, they are usually more reluctant to talk with them about more general anxieties and fears. To illustrate the benefits of peer coaching, the following activity was used which is based on Exercise 7:3 in Carrington/Whitten (2005).

The students were given the handout **HELPful** coaching and asked to read through it. The handout sets out guidelines for effective coaching under the four headings of **Hear**, **Empathise**, **List** possible actions, **Plan**. They were then asked to work in pairs, with one student acting as the coach and one as the coachee, and to choose an issue which was not too sensitive but something that the coachee was genuinely concerned about (most students chose stress). After ten minutes, they swapped roles. In the subsequent plenary discussion, the students were asked to comment on their experience and share any helpful ideas and suggestions with the other students. Most students said that this was their preferred activity, as it made them realise that there is plenty of support available if you dare to speak about your support needs.

DISC and Group Work

Students can find group work frustrating at times, and as a result, many prefer to work individually; however, learning and working effectively as part of a team or group is an extremely important skill at university and in working life. To help students to develop their group work skills, they were asked to fill in a **DISC Personality Profile** (for details, see above). The students were then asked to briefly discuss within their groups how the personality types might affect their group work before they were given a table illustrating what impact the behaviour of each type could have on the other types and asked to discuss whether any of

the statements applied to their group. Finally, they were encouraged to suggest how their individual strengths might contribute to efficient communication and a good team atmosphere.

Evaluation Results

EI Awareness Questionnaire Results

In all first meetings with a class, the students were asked to fill in the EI Awareness Questionnaire. On average, around two thirds of the students were familiar with the concept. Most mentioned that EI was just as much about recognising their own feelings and coping with problems as it was about interpreting other people's feelings. Many also stressed that EI was useful for smooth interactions with peers, friends and family. Few, however, seemed to be aware of its beneficial effects on their own well-being.

Oral Feedback Rounds

The students felt that it was important to address EI in the classroom and provide opportunities for dealing with EI-related problems. They particularly liked activities which helped them realise that their peers experienced similar anxieties and fears and that talking about their problems with the other students relaxed the pressure.

In HELPful coaching, for example, many said they felt they were not working hard enough, were unable to enjoy time off or suffered from insomnia and were both shocked and relieved to hear that their classmates had the same problems.

EI Journal

The EI Journal was used with two third-year class groups taking an introductory translation course (*Translatorische Textkompetenz*). In total, 51 students shared their journals with the teacher. It was started after the first EI activity, the **DISC Personality Profile** assessment, when students were asked to record their scores in the diary. Over the course of the semester, the outcomes of further activities were added and the students were also encouraged to add observations or respond to the teacher's questions. The last question put to the students was "Looking back

over what you have written in your EI Journal, do you feel you have developed your EI skills since the start of the semester? If so, in what ways?"

Their answers provided some very interesting insights into their perception of EI. Of the 31 students who provided a full set of data, 23 reported that they had become more aware of themselves and the impact of their behaviour on other group members. They also indicated that they had tried to work on their 'flaws' yet had not always been successful. Nine students could see little or improvement in their EI skills. Some felt that one semester was not sufficient to change the way they acted, and others quickly forgot about EI after the activity. One stressed the wish to "solely focus on studying and working for university" yet admitted that self-awareness may play a role there.

These answers underline the importance of a long-term approach to the fostering of EI skills and will need to be considered whenever an institutional strategy is considered.

Final Questionnaire Results

In two modules, namely *English: Conference Interpreting*, and *Italian: Introduction to Translation II (German-Italian)*, the students were asked to fill in a **Final Questionnaire** in which they were asked to indicate whether they had learnt anything new (YES/NO), whether the themes were introduced efficiently (YES/NO) and what areas they would have liked to explore in greater depth. The students were also asked to rate the relevance of EI in T&I courses (on a scale from 'very important' to 'not important') and, in open questions, explain what activities and themes they found particularly relevant and whether they preferred '*Teaching with EI*' or '*Teaching EI*' (see below).

In *English: Conference Interpreting* (summer semester 2018), EI was addressed both as a content subject (in an introductory lecture which was interpreted by the students and in a mock conference with several contributions on empathy in healthcare interpreting, which were also interpreted by the students) as well as in a series of EI-related activities (**Learner / Teacher expectations, Giving feedback, Acting confident, Managing Stress and HELPful Coaching**). At the beginning of the term, the **EI Awareness Questionnaire** was filled in by four students, all of whom had heard of EI. The students also received the **EI Emotional**

Intelligence Questionnaire and Personal Development Plan for completion at home.

The **Final Questionnaire** was completed by five students. All students felt that they had learnt something new about EI and that EI themes and activities had been introduced in an efficient manner. Three indicated that addressing EI-related themes was very important and two thought it was important. The areas that they would have liked to have more practice in were self-motivation (5), self-awareness (2), emotional management (2) and social skills (1).

Students' answers to the open question varied. Most mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss problems and brainstorm about possible solutions (for stress). Two students also indicated that the *Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire* had revealed interesting aspects about themselves. One student found the *Giving Feedback* and *Acting Confident* activities particularly helpful.

In *Italian: Introduction to Translation II, German – Italian* (also in the summer semester of 2018), all eleven respondents indicated that they had learned new things about EI during the semester and that the topics had been introduced in an efficient manner. Five said addressing themes related to Emotional Intelligence in T&I courses was very important, five felt it was important, and one thought it was stimulating. All appreciated the work that had been done on self-assessment, self-regulation, empathy and teamwork. Seven students would have liked more activities for increasing self-motivation and four recommended more attention be paid to social skills. In their comments in the open question, one student wrote that it would be useful to learn more about EI and its impact in their professional career.

‘Teaching with EI’ versus ‘Teaching EI’

This question sought to elicit students' views on how EI should be incorporated in the T&I classroom, should it be ‘Teaching with EI’ or ‘Teaching EI’. In *English: Conference Interpreting*, three students recommended ‘Teaching with EI’, one preferred ‘Teaching EI’ and one suggested that both approaches were relevant. The reasons given for ‘Teaching EI’ were that students felt that it would be counter-productive if they were introduced to the same EI activities in every course. Moreover, if EI workshops were part of the curriculum, this would ensure that all students were introduced to the topic.

In *Italian: Introduction to Translation II (German – Italian)* the answers were very similar: one student found that it would be preferable to have some theoretical input first before a variety of EI activities were introduced in class; two recommended ‘teaching emotional intelligence using emotional intelligence’, and one student suggested that the topic could be introduced in a workshop, but that students should then seek to develop their EI skills themselves. Further classroom activities could be included whenever these were particularly appropriate or necessary to address a specific problem.

Addressing EI as a Content Subject

As stated above, many teachers feel that they cannot devote classroom time to non-content related activities. While we hope to have shown that EI activities can improve teaching efficiency and make a valuable contribution to learning success, we also feel it is important to find ways of incorporating EI as a content theme. During the project, two approaches were trialled:

- In an Italian second-year language class, Delia Pagano used EI topics to teach vocabulary, asking students to rate the emotional import of different adjectives, to identify semantic fields, synonyms and antonyms, and developed specific grammar exercises.
- EI was also addressed in writing and oral skills classes as a theme for blogs, letters, presentations, interviews and discussion.
- In conference interpreting, Ursula Stachl-Peier gave a theoretical introduction to EI in a mock lecture which was interpreted by the students, and EI in healthcare interpreting was chosen as the topic of a mock conference (see also above).

Conclusions and Outlook

The outcomes suggest that the inclusion of EI-related activities in the T&I classroom can raise students' and teachers' awareness of the importance of developing good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as well as stress management strategies. The results of the questionnaires, as well as students' comments in the EI Journal and in informal feedback sessions, suggest that students did, indeed, become more aware of the importance of soft skills, and many felt they were able to improve in areas that needed attention. The teachers appreciated the opportunity to explore new techniques to help their students build self-confidence and cope with stress and anxiety.

Since only self-reporting instruments were used, however, it is impossible to ascertain whether measurable improvements occurred or whether improvements that were reported were directly linked to the pedagogical interventions. There is even less evidence that better EI awareness improved students' performance. Any follow-up project would, therefore, need to include psychologists and other experts so that reliable and valid measuring instruments could be designed. It would also be advisable to widen the circle of researchers and establish an international network of T&I trainers willing to pilot EI-related activities.

The project also showed that EI skill development is a long-term process and that lasting effects will only be noticeable – and noticed – if EI skills are regularly addressed and practised throughout the degree programme. This would require a more systematic approach and, ideally, the incorporation of EI into the curriculum. Several researchers have pointed out that students' academic work is largely driven by curriculum and assessment requirements (e.g. Carthy/McCann/McGilloway/McGuinness 2012) and that students focus on areas of the curriculum that are formally assessed. This sentiment was also expressed by one of the students quoted above who stressed that they wanted to “solely focus on studying and working for university” rather than do EI-related activities. As Carthy/McCann/

McGilloway/McGuinness note (ibid:75.17), “students are less likely to engage with coaching when they have busy study schedules, yet this is exactly when coaching may be of greatest benefit to them”.

What delivery format is most efficient for EI skills coaching depends, of course, on the institutional context and available resources. The delivery of a stand-alone module in the first year might be an appropriate way of ensuring that all students are familiarised with the concept and given opportunities for fostering their EI, while at the same time avoiding repeated ‘introductions’. Relevant EI activities could then be included in all courses to address specific problems that are identified either by the teachers or the students.

Recommendations for further research

Despite its limitations, this project showed that students appreciate opportunities for fostering their EI skills. It is, therefore, recommended that future research be conducted that can build on the findings reported here:

1. Development of reliable measurement instruments to determine whether students have been able to improve their EI skills;
2. Development of instruments to measure the impact of EI competences on T&I performance.
3. Further studies examining personality traits of translators and interpreters as predictors of students’ likely academic success, as well as their future success as professionals, which could be used in study and career counselling.

Given the importance afforded to personal and interpersonal skills in competence frameworks world-wide, it is our hope that further projects can be funded to continue the work started here.

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