Ressourcen und Instrumente der translationsrelevanten Hochschuldidaktik

Resources and Tools for T&I Education

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Lehrkonzepte, Forschungsberichte, Best-Practice-Modelle

Resources and Tools for T&I Education

Research Studies, Teaching Concepts, Best-Practice Results

Introducing Emotional Intelligence in the Translation Classroom

In total, 30 students participated in the pilot project during the academic year of 2017/2018; 23 students completed all EI-related activities. EI was introduced in "English/Macedonian Translation" which is a 4th-year specialist translation course during which students translate texts from a variety of fields that have particular relevance for the country's translation market. The aim of the course is to familiarise the students with different translation methods and techniques, introduce them to field-specific knowledge and terminology and engage them in collaborative learning, through, amongst other methods, project work.

At the beginning of the course, the students completed the **Emotional Intelligence Awareness Questionnaire**. The results showed that 61% had heard about EI, yet most had only vague knowledge; for 39%, EI was a completely unknown concept.

Students next completed the **DISC Personality Profile** test which assesses personality by calculating people's personal scores in the categories Dominant, Influent, Steady and Conscientious, with the highest score indicating their predominant personality type (see e.g. https://heartcc.org/qa/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/DISC-Assessment.pdf). This test increased their awareness of the existence of different personality types and reminded them that in their professional lives they will have to cooperate with diverse people and personalities.

The students also filled in the **Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire** that showed their strengths and weaknesses in the different EI domains. The questionnaire was also administered at the end of the project. A comparison of the results showed the students whether they had been able to improve in their weaker EI domains.

The Skopje project team also administered **After-class Questionnaires** after completion of every EI activity in which the students could express their personal opinions and self-perceptions. The first set of questions focused on students' emotions during class, while the second set asked them to specify EI-related competences they felt they had acquired.

Throughout the year, different activities were carried out in class. Some were adapted for use in T&I education from Mortiboys (2005), Carrington and Whitten (2006), and Stein (2009), or prepared by the teacher to fit specific needs of the students.

Qualitative and Quantitative Results
After-class Questionnaire Results

The *After-class Questionnaire* was filled in after completion of every EI activity, and comprised questions falling into the following four categories:

- Students' recognition of their own emotions;
- Familiarisation with EI-related content;
- Influence of content on students' feelings; and
- Assessment of usefulness of the EI content.

The first set of questions made reference to the five main EI domains (self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy and adeptness in relationships). The second set addressed specific EI activities and the competences these sought to develop and raised student awareness of their importance.

The *After-class Questionnaire* allowed students to reflect on their emotions during EI-related activities in class, on what may have triggered these emotions and how these affected their way of thinking and behaviour. The results of the questionnaires are presented in Table 1.

Graph bars (left to right) with values: Self-confident 80, 84; Relaxed/safe 65, 15; Intimidated 38, 8; Enthusiastic 95, 6; Optimistic 97, 4; In control of their emotions 40, 16; Emphatetic 60, 8; Compassionate 57, 16; Confronted 40, 8; Influential among others 60, 6; Encouraged 90, 22.
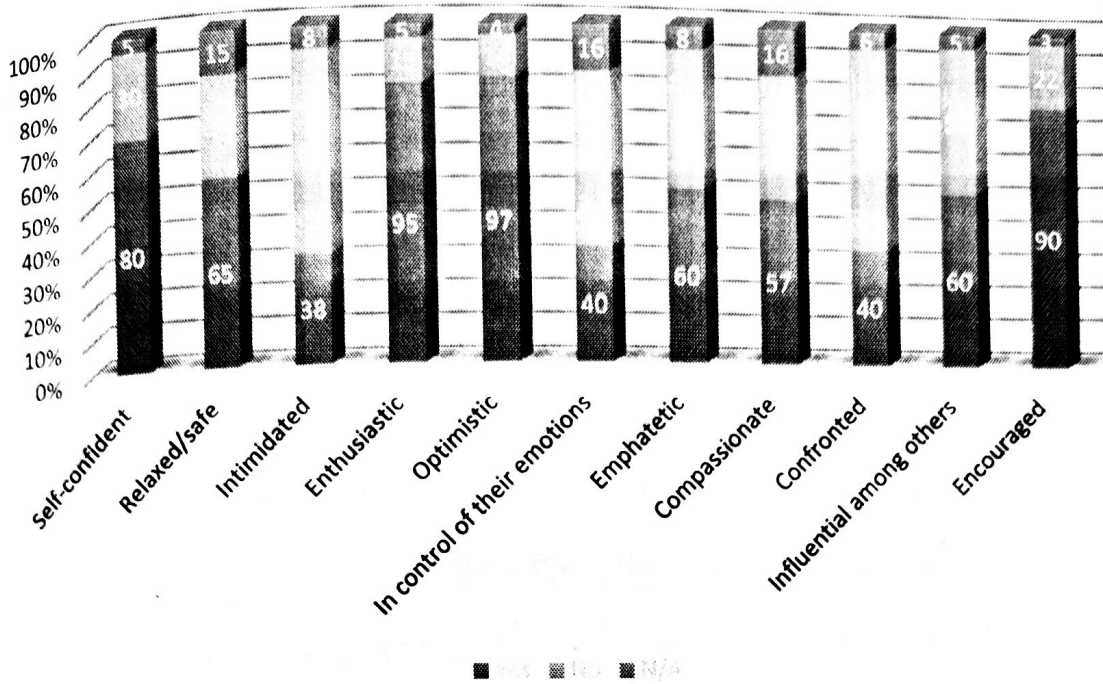
Table 1 – After-class Questionnaire Results

Table 1 shows that the predominant feelings experienced by the students during EI-related activities were optimism (84%), enthusiasm (82%), encouragement (78%) and self-confidence (69%). However, negative feelings were also reported, with students indicating that at times they felt that they had lost control of their emotions (51%), felt at loggerheads with other students (35%), intimidated (33%), taken out of their comfort zone by the class content (30%), not confident during EI activities (26%), discouraged (19%) and unenthusiastic (13%) when they were asked to complete certain assignments. Under 10% of the answers indicated that students were either unable to recognise their emotions or did not want to reveal how they felt.

These results show that many of the participating students had to work hard to manage their emotions in difficult situations, especially when they were taken out of their comfort zone. Many also said that they needed to improve their self-confidence. The main trigger of negative emotions was lack of confidence resulting from content covered in class or conflict with other students during activities in class. The results further revealed that students' dislike of a topic or activity covered in class had a negative effect on their emotions and possibly even affected the quality of their performance, especially when they felt intimidated.

Overall, the students felt the After-class Questionnaire useful as it

- helped them recognise how they thought and behaved in different situations;
- allowed them to better understand their emotions and what may have triggered them;
- motivated them to act and behave differently in similar situations in the future.

Initial EI Questionnaire Results

At the beginning of the course, 23 students also filled in the EI Questionnaire which allowed them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the five main EI domains. Table 2 shows the results (orange indicates areas that need attention, grey are weak areas):

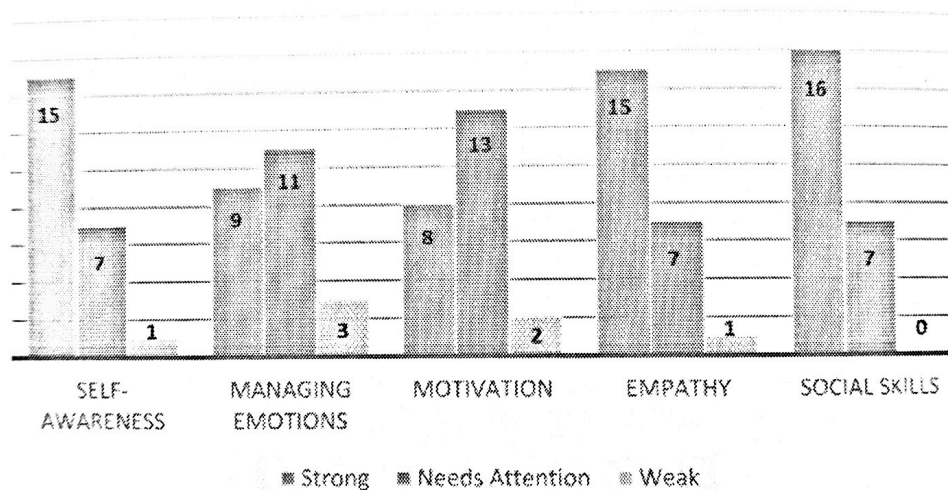### Initial EI Questionnaire Results

Table 2

The results show that students' biggest weaknesses were low self-motivation (65% = 15 students = 65%) and the inability to manage emotions (14 students = 60%), whereas their biggest strengths were social skills (16 students = 69%), strong self-awareness (15 students = 65%) and empathy (15 students = 65%).

EI-related Activities for the Translation Classroom

Based on these initial results, specific activities were implemented in the translation classroom to help students improve the various EI domains. Several of these are presented below.

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Building Self-Awareness

Awareness of their emotions is essential if students are to develop strategies for their management. Self-awareness concerns knowing our internal states, that is to say, our emotions and preferences. Building self-awareness implies understanding what triggers these emotions, emotional awareness permits us to control them and so influence the way we behave.

The activities aimed at building self-awareness undertaken in class were:

1. Becoming aware of your emotions
2. Developing self-knowledge (also referred to as *Know your preferences*), which was seen as key since it allows students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses
3. Developing a sense of self-worth and capabilities

Becoming aware of your emotions

Carrington and Whitten suggest a three-stepped approach: (1) building self-knowledge, (2) noticing your achievement, and (3) best self-visualisation (Carrington/Whitten, 2006:11-17). In order to meet the specific needs of the students, the third activity was replaced with a different activity from their book entitled Learning to Learn (Carrington/Whitten, 2006:31).

At the start, the students completed the "Thinking Preference Questionnaire – Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument", which helps students differentiate between theoretical, practical and emotional thinking and defines four different thinking styles: rational (analytical person), safekeeping (organised person), feeling (empathising person), and experimental (synergising person).[1] The aim was to encourage students to reflect on qualities and professional interests they might not be aware of and contemplate hitherto unfamiliar career choices, including work as specialised translators.

Developing self-knowledge

In the second activity, the students were asked to draw a mind map of their achievements (Carrington/Whitten, 2006:14-15) and include everything, no

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[1] Carrington/Whitten 2006:13.

matter how big or insignificant the achievement was, from coping with a difficult subject area, successfully passing a challenging examination or winning an award to being punctual, helping a classmate and meeting deadlines. After completing their achievements map,[2] the students were asked to share their achievements with the whole group.

In the *After-class Questionnaire*, 40% said that they felt proud of themselves, 16% felt optimistic about the future and 28% felt encouraged. Sixteen per cent said that they had felt intimidated, largely because they were not sure what knowledge and skills were necessary to work in a demanding specialised field and whether they would be able to acquire these.

Developing a sense of self-worth and capabilities

The third activity, therefore, aimed to help students understand how they learn best. 'Learning to learn' is an activity suggested by Carrington and Whitten (2006:31-32) and helps students identify their main motivators for study. First, the students completed a learning review and indicated what they did when they tackled a demanding task or difficult subject area. Some students found self-motivation most beneficial (doing in-depth research), others were very goal-oriented (which means that they performed best when they set themselves a specific goal), and others sought assistance (in the form of targeted training from professionals). The activity shows students that hard work and perseverance are crucial to success and that giving up in frustration is not an adequate response. This realisation should also help them overcome difficulties and challenges in the workplace.

Given students' feedback, it can be concluded that the activities helped students to greatly improve their motivation and overcome anxieties and fears. What is impossible to ascertain is whether the activities also had a beneficial impact on the quality of their translations.

Follow-up EI Questionnaire Results

At the end of the two-year project, several conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, most students who attended the course thought that the translation tasks and EI activities were useful because they introduced them to aspects that were

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[2] Carrington/Whitten, 2006:15.

relevant for their professional careers. When students feel the atmosphere in the classroom is "conducive to learning", "stimulating", "inspiring", "motivating", "challenging", "constructive or productive", "communicative", and "full of knowledge" (rather than "stressful", "passive" and "monotonous"), this increases their motivation.

Secondly, the activities appear to have allowed students to improve their skills in several EI domains. At the end of the year, the 23 course participants were again asked to fill in the same EI Questionnaire they had completed at the beginning (Table 3):
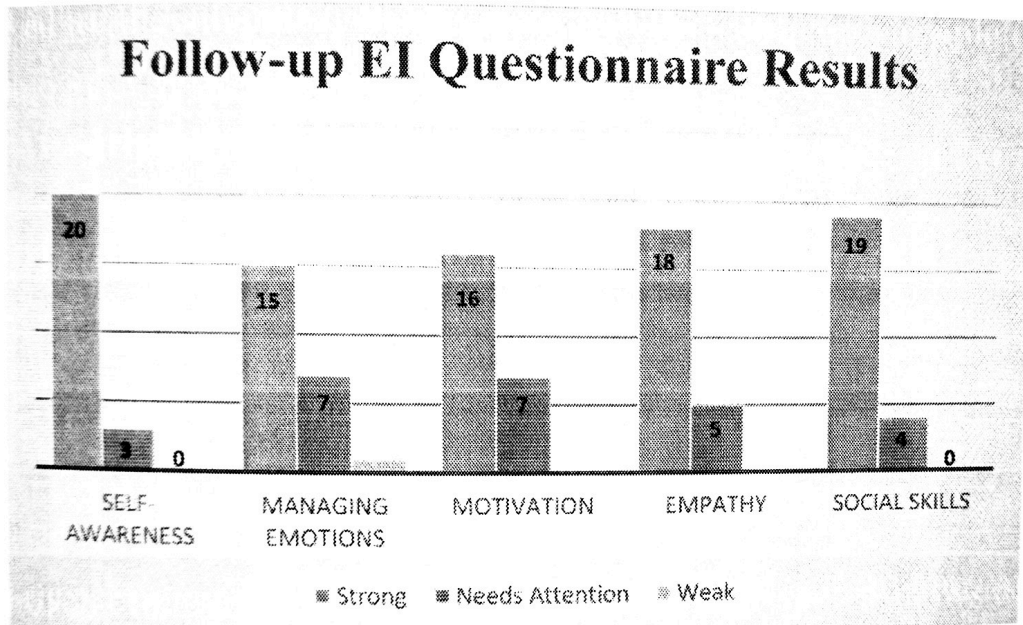
Follow-up EI Questionnaire Results

Domain	Strong	Needs Attention	Weak
SELF-AWARENESS	20	3	0
MANAGING EMOTIONS	15	7	
MOTIVATION	16	7	
EMPATHY	18	5	
SOCIAL SKILLS	19	4	0

Table 3

A comparison of the results of Table 2 and Table 3 shows that students improved in all EI domains. The biggest improvement was in students' ability to motivate themselves; only 7 students (30%) still felt this was an area that needed attention. Students also felt that they were better able to manage their emotions, with only 8 students (34%) indicating that they were still having difficulties. While it is, of course, impossible to prove that students' EQ increased, these results suggest that the EI-related activities raised students' awareness of personal and interpersonal skills and their importance in professional life. These aspects are not normally addressed in the translation classroom.

Thirdly, the EI-related activities also changed students' understanding of professional practice and the likely challenges they will encounter in their future careers. Before the course, students described translation as a one-way process that involves using a computer and dictionaries and described the translator as a person who translates words and texts from one language into another. At the end of the course, the students started describing translation as a two-way process that involves collaboration with many different stakeholders, including other translators, clients from different cultural backgrounds and subject experts, and began seeing the translator as a person who communicates meaning, knowledge and ideas as well as emotions.

Fourthly, the EI activities also helped the translator teacher create a dynamic learning environment through collaborative translation projects, comprising home assignments, in-class group work and group discussions. These enhance student autonomy, allow them to hone their social and analytical skills, and, by taking them outside their comfort zone, also motivate them to enter unfamiliar fields.