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Towards Integrating Emotional Intelligence in the Interpreter's Toolkit: Emotions' Management Training of Translation Graduate Students in KSA

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (henceforth, EI) is a critical but often an overlooked component in interpreter training, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia (KSA) training curricula. This paper examines the integration of EI into the training toolkit for interpreters in KSA, focusing on the recognition and management of emotions. This study, conducted in a Saudi University, investigates the crucial role of EI in interpreter training. A mixed-method approach employing the EQ-i self-assessment, a self-developed questionnaire, and interviews with graduate interpreting students and trainers reveals a gap between the recognition of EI's importance and its actual integration into training programs. While the EQ-i data suggests a baseline level of EI in participants, current programs prioritize language proficiency over EI development. This disconnect necessitates a paradigm shift—a move towards an integrated training model that emphasizes both linguistic skills and crucial interpersonal skills like empathy, cultural competence, and stress management, all key aspects of EI. The study recommends faculty training on EI principles and integration methods, curriculum development with experiential learning activities, and collaboration with EI experts. The paper puts focus on the necessity for interpreter training programs in KSA universities in order to equip future interpreters with the comprehensive skill set to excel in their emotionally complex profession. Further research is necessary to explore culturally appropriate EI assessment tools and the long-term

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impact of such training on interpreter performance and career development.

Keywords: Interpreter training; Emotional intelligence; Emotions' management; EQ-i scale; KSA

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in the field of interpreting, particularly in the context of training interpreters (Zhang, 2022). The significance of EI is further underscored by research highlighting its impact on interpreters' concentration, stress levels, and overall well-being (Khojaly, n.d.). Adroher (2022) emphasizes the need for early preparation of student interpreters to manage the high cognitive and emotional demands of the profession. Moreover, EI has been identified as a significant factor in career decision-making processes, with implications for both professional success and personal well-being (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008). The ability to manage one's own emotions and understand those of others, as encompassed by EI, is crucial for interpreters who often encounter emotionally charged situations and must make critical decisions under pressure (Ungureanu, 2017). However, the application of EI in the specific context of interpreter training in Saudi Arabia requires a deeper understanding of its unique impact. In a society where EI is a relatively new concept, it is essential to explore how it can be integrated into the training curriculum for interpreters effectively.

Understanding the cultural and social dynamics of Saudi Arabia is paramount in this process. These dynamics influence the interpretation of emotions and social interactions across diverse settings. Interpreters serve as cultural bridges, conveying meaning not just between languages, but also across emotional landscapes (Bonvillain, 2019; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Their ability to understand and manage emotions, alongside their linguistic competence, significantly impacts their performance. This aligns with the concept of the interpreter as a "linguistic and cultural mediator," as highlighted by Adroher (2022), emphasizing the need for interpreters to develop both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. This is particularly relevant in high-pressure interpreting situations, where the ability to manage stress and maintain focus is crucial (Khojaly, n.d.). Additionally, interpreters often face career decision difficulties, and EI may play a role in navigating these challenges (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008). The complex emotional landscape of interpreting, including the potential for stress, burnout, and

decision-making challenges, necessitates a comprehensive understanding of EI and its integration into training programs (Ungureanu, 2017). Despite this, EI remains an overlooked skill in interpreter training programs, particularly within the Kingdom.

This paper argues for a paradigm shift, trying to drive educators to recognize the value of EI and integrate it into interpreter training curricula. Studies have shown a positive correlation between EI and job performance in higher education within Saudi Arabia (Nasir et al., 2023). Similarly, Tilwani et al. (2022) found a significant link between EI and cognitive strategy use, as well as vocabulary knowledge, among intermediate language learners in the Kingdom. Moreover, research suggests that EI can be developed through training and practice, as evidenced by studies showing that experienced interpreters exhibit better stress management and focus compared to novices (Khojaly, n.d.). This supports Adroher's (2022) call for integrating mindfulness-based training into interpreting courses to equip students with tools to cope with stress and enhance their overall performance. Furthermore, enhancing EI could potentially aid interpreters in making informed career decisions and overcoming associated difficulties (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008).

Moreover, recent research has highlighted the role of EI in leadership and decision-making, which are vital skills for interpreters working in varied and often high-pressure environments (Hubscher-Davidson & Lehr, 2021). To fully grasp the potential impact of EI on interpreter training in Saudi Arabia, investigations into specific case studies or empirical evidence from similar cultural contexts are necessary. This can offer salient explanations on the effectiveness of EI training and its correlation with both interpreting performance and satisfaction among student interpreters.

To begin with, the concept of EI will be underscored with a special focus on EI models. Next, previous studies of EI in the field of interpreting will be laid out as part of the literature review section. The third section of this paper will be devoted to methodology wherein participants and context will be presented and research paradigms will be explored. Then, the research findings will be displayed while bringing out the five dimensions of EI: Self-Perception, Interpersonal, Decision Making, Self-Expression, and Stress Management.

Interview analysis will be sketched out afterward at the same time as the recognition of EI's importance along with its implications will be emphasized. The penultimate section is that of limitations and recommendations. Finally, the paper ends with a conclusion and a list of references.

2. Defining emotional intelligence: a framework for success

The rising awareness within the translation studies community of the role of translators and interpreters as cultural mediators rather than mere linguistic reproducers nudged practitioners to re-purpose their focus towards the behaviours of those mediators and their working process (c.f. Chesterman, 1997; Hönig, 1998; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007; Alvstad, Hild et al., 2011). The object of study shifted from the script or the words to the ones behind them; that is from translations/interpretations to translators/interpreters (Munday, 2008a, p. 15). This led to linking linguistic features to other features and wider contexts pertaining to fields like sociology and psychology. Attention was brought particularly to the relationship between the emotional aspects of translators and interpreters' behaviors and their performance (Jääskeläinen, 1999; Hansen, 2005; Hubscher-Davidson, 2009). This relationship has remained under-researched until recently when calls were made for acknowledging and highlighting the value of emotional intelligence of translating and interpreting students and practitioners.

The genesis of the science of emotions dates back to the first century B.C. when Publilius Syrus wrote: "rule your feelings, lest your feelings rule you" (Syrus c. 100BC/1961 in Salovey & Mayer 2004, p. 2). However, the foundation of emotional intelligence was only laid by Thorndike in 1920 who suggested the concept of social intelligence. Then, Gardner introduced the Multiple Intelligences Theory in his book *Frames of Mind* (1983) based on the idea of social intelligence. This contributed significantly into the popularization of the concept of emotional intelligence. Gardner put forward seven types of intelligence, including interpersonal intelligence which is the ability to understand other people, and intrapersonal intelligence which is the ability to understand yourself (Gardner, 1983). Emotional intelligence as a fully-fledged concept culminated in 1990 with Salovey and Mayer who developed a formal theory of the concept. In this

respect, they defined the construct of emotional intelligence 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" (Salovey & Mayer 1990, p. 189).

Therefore, EI is more than just feelings; it is a set of learned skills that allow individuals to direct their own emotions and those of others (Harvard Health Publishing [retrieved 2024]). It encompasses the ability to identify and manage emotions, understand and empathize with others, and control these skills for effective communication and positive relationships. Research by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995) highlights EI's role in appraising and regulating emotions, both our own and those of others. In the context of interpreting, EI can be seen as a crucial component of the "holistic education" advocated for by Adroher (2022), encompassing not only linguistic and technical skills but also the interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities necessary for effective mediation. Bar-On's (1997, 2002) model of EI, which emphasizes the role of emotional and social competencies in personal and interpersonal success, is particularly relevant for interpreters who must navigate complex emotional landscapes in their work. This model highlights the importance of self-awareness, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and stress management for interpreters, aligning with the challenges and demands identified in the literature (Khojaly, n.d.; Adroher, 2022).

One of the most prominent models of EI comes from Daniel Goleman (1995), who breaks down this complex concept into five key components. The first, self-awareness, involves recognizing one's own emotions and their impact on himself/herself and those around him/her. Self-regulation then builds upon this awareness, allowing the individual to manage emotions effectively to achieve desired outcomes. Motivation connects with the power of emotions, directing them to drive goal-oriented behavior. In addition, empathy is another crucial component that fosters understanding and constructive responses to the emotions of others. Finally, social skills enable the person to build Positive relationship-sandfostereffectivecommunicationthroughinterpersonal interaction. According to Goleman, what differentiates people from each other is the manner in handling their relations. Hence, a correspondence is promptly drawn between low emotional intelligence and low production level which even-

tually causes a reduction in a person's IQ level. By the same token, Goleman emphasizes the important role that emotional intelligence plays in job performance (Titrek, 2013, p. 81).

Besides, "according to popular opinion and work-place testimonials, Emotional Intelligence increases performance and productivity" (Lam & Kirby, 2002). The correlation is, then, immediately established between Emotional Intelligence and successful task performance (Schutte, 2001).

3. Literature review

Numerous studies have highlighted the significance of EI in the field of interpreting. Research has shown that interpreters with high EI are better able to understand and convey the speaker's intended message accurately (Dean et al., 2001; Kurz, 2003; Katan, 2016; Jiménez Ivars et al., 2014). This accuracy can be attributed to the interpreter's ability to monitor and distribute their focus effectively, as well as their capacity to develop and enhance both voluntary and unconscious cognitive abilities (Daro, as cited in Khojaly, n.d.). It should be noted that interpreters can adapt their interpretation style to match the speaker's emotions, resulting in more effective communication. Additionally, EI helps interpreters manage their own emotions during challenging interpreting situations, reducing stress and improving performance in general. This is especially important in remote interpreting scenarios, where the absence of non-linguistic cues can increase cognitive load and stress (Riccardi et al., as cited in Khojaly, n.d.). The importance of stress management and emotional regulation in interpreting is further emphasized by Adroher (2022), who highlights the potential negative impacts of stress on both interpreter well-being and performance. Furthermore, Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2008) found that lower levels of EI were associated with increased career decision difficulties in an Italian sample of apprentices, suggesting that EI may play a role in interpreters' career development and choices. The complex emotional landscape of interpreting, including the potential for stress, burnout, and decision-making challenges, necessitates a comprehensive understanding of EI and its integration into training programs (Ungureanu, 2017).

More recent research continues to explore the impact of EI on interpreters. Katan (2016) found a positive cor-

relation between EI and interpreters' ability to understand and convey the speaker's intended message accurately. This suggests that EI plays a crucial role in achieving accurate interpretation. Studies by Wei (2023) and Rosendo (2021) delve deeper into the complexity of emotions in interpreting. Wei emphasizes how interpreter emotions can influence their behavior, decision-making, and interpretation of reality. Rosendo adds another layer by highlighting the impact of emotions on interpreter positionality, particularly in dealing with intricate conflict situations.

The focus on integrating EI into interpreter training programs has also gained momentum. Balakhonov (2022) proposed various strategies, including role-playing exercises, feedback on emotional expression and empathy, and promoting self-reflection among interpreters. This aligns with the broader recognition of the complex interplay between language, culture, and emotion in interpreting (Rosendo & Todorova, 2022). In addition, there is a need for specialized training that addresses the specific ethical, cultural, and professional challenges faced by interpreters in different contexts.

It is important at this juncture to juxtapose the present research paper's main thesis which recognizes the importance of the integration of EI in interpreters' training and institutions' curricula based on the correlation between EI and interpreters' performances with its antithesis. The antithesis, based on other studies, postulates that EI does not have any relationship with the quality of translation or interpreting. A large sample group of would-be interpreters was used to prove that there is no important relationship between negative emotions (fear of public speaking and anxiety) and interpreters' performance (Ivars & Calatayud, 2001; Varzande & Jadidi, 2015).

The effectiveness of incorporating EI training into interpreter training programs has also been studied. Çoban & Ümmügülsüm (2016) found emotional management courses to be beneficial in improving EI and reducing anxiety and depression among community interpreters. Evans & Allen (2002) add that such training can enhance interpreters' abilities to manage their emotions while interpreting others' and ultimately improve their interactions with patients in healthcare settings. On the other hand, the recognition of the significance of EI is underlined by the European Commission Directorate-General for Translation. This is clearly

spelled out in their published list of essential competencies for professional translators where a set of interpersonal and intercultural skills are identified, including adaptability to new situations, ability to self-evaluate and knowing how to interact with different communities. Visibly, these competencies which send directly to the construct of EI are highly significant to professional bodies.

In conclusion, a growing body of research and research institutions across the past two decades highlights the crucial role of EI in interpreter performance. From early studies on stress management to recent investigations on emotional awareness and interpreter positionality, the evidence is clear: EI is a key skill for effective interpreting. Research also explores various strategies for integrating EI training into programs, with studies supporting its positive impact on interpreters' abilities and overall performance.

Notwithstanding the growing interest in EI and the acknowledgment of its profitability in the field of translation and interpreting, it is still under-researched in interpreting studies except for the work carried out by Karen Bontempo in the field of Sign Language Interpreting.

4. Methodology

To integrate EI in interpreter training in KSA, this study aims to identify gaps in the current training programs, assess students' attitudes toward these programs, and evaluate teaching and learning practices. A mixed-method approach was employed to achieve these objectives.

Firstly, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) by Bar-On at first, then a self-developed questionnaire were used among BA students of interpretation in KSA. The first tool is supposed to help identify their current level of EI whereas the second can help to assess and identify any gaps in their training. The survey aims at gathering feedback on the potential benefits of incorporating EI in interpreter training.

4.1 Participants and context

The study targeted BA students enrolled in interpretation programs in two specialties French and English within a Saudi academic institution. A total of 34 French interpreter learners and 58 English interpreter learners participated in the study. The research started assessing their current EI

levels and perceptions of their training programs. To get a clearer vision from experienced professionals, the study opted for interviews with five practicing interpreters and trainers working in the same academic institution as part of the program. This combined approach offered a more likely comprehensive understanding of EI's practical application in interpreting from both student and professional perspectives in the Saudi academic institution under study.

4.2 Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) by Bar-On

Considering the specific requirements of consecutive interpretation students, the research applied the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) developed by Bar-On. This tool is well-suited to achieve the study's objectives due to its comprehensive assessment across 15 emotional and social competencies. These competencies are grouped into five core factors: intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. As these factors directly influence effective communication and interpretation, the EQ-i provides a valued measure of EI skills crucial for consecutive interpretation students in KSA.

The analysis of the EQ-i data focuses on the following factors encompassed within the inventory (**Table 1**):

Table 1. EQ-i 2.0 Scale ¹.

Self-Perception	Self-Regard Self-Actualization Emotional Self Awareness
Interpersonal	Interpersonal Relationships Empathy Social Responsibility
Decision Making	Problem Solving Reality Testing Impulse Control
Self-Expression	Emotional Expression Assertiveness Independence
Stress Management:	Flexibility Stress Tolerance Optimism

¹ The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0): <https://www.eiconsortium.org/measures/eqi.html>.

On that particular scale, the cross-cultural element could be included as part of EI measurement as EI also in-

cludes the ability to flexibly understand and construe the message in its actual setting. On that score, Fineman states:

What we do, think and feel can be regarded as interpenetrative, context-bound and fluid [...] emotion's potential multifacetedness suggests that any one approach to understanding 'it' will be just that – one approach. It is necessarily partial, meaningful only in terms of the philosophy that informs it, the medium through which it is conveyed and the receiving audience (Fineman 2004, p. 721).

4.3 Interview

Secondly, interviews will be conducted with experienced interpreters and trainers to gain insights into their perspectives on the importance of EI in interpreting. These interviews will provide valuable qualitative data on the challenges faced by interpreters in KSA and the potential strategies for integrating EI into training programs.

Semi-structured interviews followed to obtain qualitative data. The qualitative data provide more in-depth information about the context for the quantitative findings, contributing to build a more holistic understanding of the role of EI in interpreter training.

5. Results

5.1 EQ-i.2.0 scale

This section analyzes the results of the EQ-i 2.0 scale administered to students in KSA in academic institutions, focusing on the five core dimensions of EI: Self-Perception, Interpersonal, Decision Making, Self-Expression, and Stress Management.

Self-perception

The students demonstrate a positive self-image, reflected in the high mean score (3.74) for self-regard. This suggests confidence in their abilities and a positive expectation of success in their roles (Item 3). Additionally, the data indicates a strong motivation for self-improvement, evident in the high mean score (3.74) for self-actualization.

While self-regard and motivation appear to be strong points, the data suggests a need for improvement in emotional self-awareness. The mean score for this factor is 3.03, lower than the scores for self-regard and self-actualization. This

is further highlighted by the low score (3.03) for the statement regarding recognizing one's own emotions (Item 22). This indicates that some students may struggle to identify their emotions effectively, which could hinder their ability to manage them during interpretation tasks (**Table 2**).

Interpersonal

The students demonstrate a strong ability to understand and respond to non-verbal cues, as evidenced by the high mean scores for awareness of non-verbal messages (3.50) and recognizing emotions from facial expressions (3.71). These skills are crucial for building rapport and effective communication in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the high score for empathy (mean = 3.71 for empathizing with others' experiences) indicates their ability to understand and share the feelings of others. This is essential for interpreters, as it allows them to accurately convey the speaker's emotional tone and message **Table 3**.

While the data suggests strong interpersonal skills in some areas, there is room for improvement in social responsibility and sharing emotions. The lower score for "like sharing emotions" (mean = 3.00) might indicate a tendency to be more reserved, potentially impacting their ability to build a strong emotional connection with others. Additionally, moderate scores in social responsibility suggest that some students might benefit from a stronger sense of social and ethical awareness. All in all, the table reveals that the students possess a constant foundation in empathy and non-verbal communication, essential skills for building rapport and interpreting emotions. However, there is potential for growth in social responsibility and sharing emotions.

Decision-making

Table 4 shows that the participants demonstrate strong problem-solving abilities, particularly when in a positive mood (mean = 3.85 for easy problem-solving with good mood). This suggests they can effectively analyze situations and develop solutions when they feel optimistic and confident. Furthermore, the high score for re-evaluating life events (mean = 4.12) indicates a strong capacity for reality testing. This means they can objectively assess situations and adjust their approach when necessary, demonstrating sound judgment.

Despite the fact problem-solving and reality testing appear to be strengths, the data shows a need for improvement

Table 2. Students Responses to Items: 1, 3, 9, 22 related to Self-Perception.

Item	Statement	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	% Agree/Strongly Agree
1	Know when to talk about personal problems	3.53	4	4	1.27	58.82%
3	Expect to do well in tasks	3.74	4	5	1.14	61.76%
9	Understand own emotions	3.23	3	3	1.34	52.94%
22	Easily recognize own emotions	3.03	3	3	1.27	35.29%

Table 3. Students' Responses to Items: 11, 15, 18, 25, 26, 29 Related to the Interpersonal.

Item	Statement	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	% Agree/Strongly Agree
11	Like sharing emotions	3.00	3	3	1.37	39.71%
15	Aware of non-verbal messages sent	3.50	4	4	1.26	58.82%
18	Recognize emotions from facial expressions	3.71	4	4	1.22	70.59%
25	Understand non-verbal messages from others	3.35	3	3	1.21	52.94%
26	Empathize with others' experiences	3.71	4	4	1.00	73.53%
29	Know feelings from looking at others	3.32	3	3	1.20	50.00%

in impulse control. The low mean score for “give up due to fear of failure” (2.41) might indicate a tendency to give up easily in the face of challenges or setbacks. This could potentially hinder their performance in high-pressure interpreting situations. The analysis suggests that the students interpreters possess strong skills in problem-solving and reality testing, enabling them to make sound decisions and adapt to changing situations. Yet, there is room for improvement in impulse control.

Self-expression

Although the data is limited, it offers some understanding of the students' stress management and decision-making abilities. The high mean score for “positive mood leads to new ideas” (3.94) proposes that the students tend to be optimistic and find motivation in positive emotions. This can be beneficial for generating creative solutions and maintaining a positive outlook during challenging situations. Additionally, the moderate score for “motivated by imagining good outcomes” (3.50) indicates that they utilize goal setting and positive visualization to some extent, which are helpful strategies for decision-making (Table 5).

The data highlights a potential area for development in emotional regulation. The low mean score for “sustain positive feelings” (2.94) might indicate difficulty maintaining a positive emotional state or managing stress effectively. This could hinder the students' ability to make clear decisions under pressure or maintain focus during long inter-

preting sessions. Similar to the previous analysis, the limited number of items from the questionnaire restricts a more comprehensive assessment. A more extensive questionnaire or additional data points would be necessary to provide a deeper understanding of the students' stress management and decision-making skills. Still, there is room for improvement in emotional regulation, which could enhance their ability to manage stress and make clear choices under pressure. A more inclusive assessment by means of additional tools would be beneficial in gaining a clearer picture of their stress management and decision-making skills.

Stress-management

Data in Table 6 shows strengths in flexibility and emotional awareness, which are central for managing stress effectively. The high mean scores for “new possibilities with improved mood” (4.12) and “use good mood to overcome obstacles” (3.56) indicate that the students can adapt their approach and find creative solutions when in a positive emotional state. Additionally, the high score for “recognize feelings from voice tone” (3.79) demonstrates their ability to identify emotions in others, which can be helpful in navigating potentially stressful interactions.

It seems that positive aspects of stress management emerge in the data and this can more likely help in improvement in stress tolerance and optimism. The scores for “seek activities that make happy” (4.00) and “emotions make life worth living” (3.68) fall within a moderate range. Although

Table 4. Students Responses to Items: 6, 10, 17, 28 Related to Decision-making.

Item	Statement	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	% Agree/Strongly Agree
6	Re-evaluate life events	4.12	4	5	0.97	85.29%
10	Expect good things to happen	3.50	4	4	1.18	50.00%
17	Easy problem solving with good mood	3.85	4	4	1.08	82.35%
28	Give up due to fear of failure	2.41	2	2	1.19	13.24%

Table 5. Students Responses to Items: 12, 20, 23, 24 Related to Self-Expression.

Item	Statement	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	% Agree
12	Sustain positive feelings	2.94	3	3	1.27	38.24%
20	Positive mood leads to new ideas	3.94	4	5	1.04	72.06%
23	Motivated by imagining good outcomes	3.50	4	4	1.10	61.76%
24	Praise others for good work	3.82	4	4	0.95	79.41%

these scores advocate some stress-reduction strategies and appreciation for emotions, they do not necessarily translate to a high level of stress tolerance. Similarly, the mean score for items related to optimism (“help others feel better” - 3.68) suggests a moderate level, which could be further enhanced. A more positive outlook can be a good asset in managing stress effectively.

6. Interview analysis

This section provides a qualitative analysis of five interviews conducted with five interpreter trainers belonging to the same academic institution under study. The analysis is structured around sub-headings to align with the research questions and objectives of the study. These insights complement the quantitative findings from the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) to offer a comprehensive view of EI’s role and impact in interpreter training.

6.1 Current state of EI integration

Recognition of EI importance

All five interviewees acknowledged the significance of emotional aspects in the interpretation process, indicating an inherent understanding of the importance of EI. The first interviewee, with experience in interpreting, actively integrates EI elements such as managing emotions and developing social skills into their teaching practice. They emphasize the importance of EI for understanding nonverbal cues, emotional discrepancies, and cultural subtleties essential for accurate interpretation. The second interviewee, although

unfamiliar with the term “EI,” recognizes the impact of emotional and psychological factors like anxiety and fear during interpretation. The third, the fourth and the fifth interviewees also acknowledge the role of emotions in language learning and interpretation, despite having limited formal knowledge of EI.

Gaps in formal integration

Despite the recognition of EI’s importance, there is a notable gap in its formal integration into interpreter training programs. The first interviewee actively incorporates EI into their curriculum, using interactive exercises and collaborative learning to enhance students’ emotional and social skills. However, the second interviewee has not intentionally included EI elements, relying instead on personal observations of emotions during interpretation. Similarly, the third, the fourth and the fifth interviewees have not formally integrated EI into her teaching practices, focusing more on language practice and self-learning.

6.2 Gap between need and practice

The interviews reveal a clear prioritization of language proficiency in current training programs, often at the expense of developing crucial EI skills. This prioritization highlights a significant gap between the recognized need for EI and its actual practice in interpreter training. The emphasis on language skills is evident across all three interviews, with the first interviewee noting time constraints as a major challenge for incorporating additional EI instruction. The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth interviewees also focus heavily on language practice and specialized lexicons, acknowledg-

Table 6. Students' Responses to Items: 7, 8, 14, 30, 31, 32 Related to Stress Management.

Item	Statement	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	% Agree/Strongly Agree
7	New possibilities with improved mood	4.12	4	4	0.97	82.35%
8	Emotions make life worth living	3.68	4	4	1.05	67.65%
14	Seek activities that make happy	4.00	4	5	1.05	72.06%
30	Help others feel better	3.68	4	4	1.10	79.41%
31	Use good mood to overcome obstacles	3.56	4	4	1.10	61.76%
32	Recognize feelings from voice tone	3.79	4	4	1.05	72.06%

ing the emotional aspects but not formally addressing them in their teaching.

The integration of EI into interpreter training faces several challenges, as highlighted by the interviewees. The first interviewee identifies time constraints, lack of resources, trained instructors, and valid assessment methods as major barriers. The second interviewee suggests that skepticism and a lack of awareness among educators about EI's importance also hinder its integration. Trying to cope with these challenges requires a systematic approach to faculty training, curriculum development, and collaboration with EI experts.

6.3 Supporting the research questions

The interviews suggest a need to assess how interpreters in KSA manage their own emotions and those of speakers. While none of the teachers explicitly mentioned assessing students' EI, all acknowledged the importance of emotional aspects in interpretation. For instance, the second interviewee noted the impact of emotions like anxiety and fear on the interpreting process. This indicates that interpreters are likely aware of emotional influences to some degree. However, a more structured assessment is necessary to determine the extent of this awareness and management during interpretation.

Moreover, the potential benefits of EI for interpreter training are evident from the interviews. Yet, concrete evidence on its impact in KSA is lacking. The first interviewee, who actively integrates EI elements, believes it enhances interpretation accuracy, communication effectiveness, cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution skills, and professional growth. On the other hand, other interviewees, who have not formally integrated EI, could not provide specific evidence of its impact on training quality. Therefore, further research that tracks student performance before and after incorporating EI training could provide more understanding

of its benefits for KSA's training programs.

Additionally, several crucial EI skills for interpreters were identified in the interviews. The first interviewee emphasized self-awareness, cultural competence, stress management, and active listening as essential for effective interpretation. These skills align with established EI competencies, indicating their relevance in the context of interpreter training. Furthermore, the second and third interviewees' observations of emotions like anxiety and fear also underscore the importance of emotional management. While focusing on language skills, the fourth and fifth interviewees recognize the role of emotions, suggesting that EI skills are intuitively deemed important.

In addition, the interviews advocate promising strategies for integrating EI into interpreter training programs. For example, the first interviewee employs methods like interactive exercises that simulate challenging interpersonal situations, allowing students to practice emotional management. They also emphasize active listening and observation skills, fostering collaborative learning environments to enhance EI. Training instructors on EI fundamentals and integrating EI throughout the curriculum with experiential learning activities are recommended. These strategies could be adapted and implemented more widely across KSA's training programs.

Moreover, the perceived benefits of integrating EI training include enhanced interpretation accuracy, communication effectiveness, cultural sensitivity, and professional growth. These benefits, highlighted by the first interviewee, align with the intuitive recognition of EI's role by the second and third interviewees. However, several challenges were identified, including a lack of resources, trained instructors, limited time-frames, and valid assessment methods. Additionally, skepticism and lack of awareness among educators about EI's importance were mentioned as barriers. Therefore, faculty training, curriculum development, and collaboration with EI experts will be crucial for successful integration.

To conclude, the qualitative analysis of the interviews reveals a growing awareness of the importance of EI in interpreter training in KSA. While some educators actively incorporate EI practices, others recognize its significance but face challenges in formal integration. The findings highlight the need for structured EI training, reliable assessment methods, and resources to support educators. Further research should focus on developing and testing EI integration strategies, measuring their impact on interpreter performance, and addressing the identified barriers to foster a more holistic approach to interpreter education.

7. Discussion

This study treats EI in interpreter training programs in a Saudi academic institution. The analysis of data from the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) and qualitative interviews with interpreter trainers provides a more explicit understanding of EI's perception, integration, and impact within the KSA context.

The current study's findings regarding the recognition of EI's importance in interpreter training align with previous research that emphasizes its crucial role in various professions (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997, 2002). This study brings into line with a growing body of research highlighting the significance of EI in interpreter training (Zhang, 2022). Studies have shown a positive correlation between EI and job performance in higher education within Saudi Arabia (Nasir et al., 2023). Similarly, Tilwani et al. (2022) found a significant link between EI and cognitive strategy use, as well as vocabulary knowledge, among intermediate language learners in the Kingdom. This emphasizes the potential benefits of integrating EI training for interpreters in KSA.

The moderate strengths in self-regard, empathy, and problem-solving observed in the EQ-i results echo Di Fabio and Palazzeschi's (2008) findings that individuals with higher EI tend to possess heightened self-awareness and adaptive decision-making skills. In addition, this aligns with the concept of "emotional intelligence" as defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), which encompasses skills like self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

However, a significant gap exists between recognition and integration of EI into training programs. Simply, when

interpreters demonstrate baseline EI skills, the interviews revealed a predominant focus on language proficiency over EI development in both programs. This mirrors observations made by Valero-Garcés (2006) and Baistow (2000), who identified a similar lack of emphasis on emotional and psychological aspects in interpreter training. This prioritization of language skills, often due to time constraints and limited resources, creates a barrier to integrating keen EI training. It could also explain the potentially lower scores observed in emotional expression and stress management in the EQ-i data.

Both the EQ-i data and interviews identified key EI skills for interpreters in KSA, including self-awareness, empathy, cultural competence, and emotional regulation. Interviews further emphasized the importance of managing emotions during interpretation and fostering cultural sensitivity, underscoring the need for training in these specific areas. In other words, the ability to manage emotions and understand those of others is crucial for interpreters (Ungureanu, 2017). They often encounter emotionally charged situations and must make critical decisions under pressure (Adroher, 2022). That is why, taking Adroher's (2022) call for integrating mindfulness-based training into interpreting courses to equip students with tools to cope with stress and enhance their overall performance is to be encouraged. Furthermore, enhancing EI could potentially aid interpreters in making informed career decisions and overcoming associated difficulties (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008).

The findings of this study underscore the significance of EI in the complex field of interpreting. Even though the participants recognize the impact of emotions on their work, the integration of EI into formal training remains limited. The study identified a need for structured assessment of EI management and highlighted the potential benefits of EI integration in enhancing interpreter performance, particularly in terms of accuracy, communication effectiveness, and cultural sensitivity.

To fully realize the potential of EI in interpreter training, future research should focus on developing and implementing targeted EI training modules, assessing the long-term impact of EI on interpreter careers, and exploring the relationship between EI and interpreting quality. By addressing these areas, the field can advance towards a more holistic approach to interpreter education that equips professionals

with the necessary skills to excel in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

7.1 Recognition of EI's importance

Both the EQ-i data and qualitative interviews underscore the recognized importance of EI in interpreter training, aligning with the broader literature emphasizing its crucial role in various professions (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997, 2002). The moderate strengths in self-regard, empathy, and problem-solving observed in the EQ-i results suggest a foundational level of emotional awareness and management among interpreters, echoing Di Fabio and Palazzeschi's (2008) findings that individuals with higher EI are more likely to possess self-awareness and adaptive decision-making skills. Interviewees, regardless of their formal EI training, consistently acknowledged the critical role of emotions in interpreting, highlighting the need for skills such as managing anxiety, understanding non-verbal cues, and cultural sensitivity—a sentiment echoed by scholars like Adroher (2022) who emphasizes the interpreter's role as a “linguistic and cultural mediator.” Furthermore, Idri's (2011) work in a language learning context identified several strategies to reduce anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), which can be adapted for interpreter training. These strategies include managing expectations, providing positive reinforcement, and offering individualized support.

Reinforcing the importance of addressing emotional factors in language learning, Idri & Akkar (2018) identified several sources of student anxiety, including low proficiency, fear of mistakes and negative evaluation, and lack of confidence. These factors mirror the anxieties acknowledged by interviewees in the current study, highlighting the need for EI training in interpreter programs. Furthermore, Idri & Akkar (2018) explored student coping mechanisms that can be adapted for interpreter training. These strategies include preparation, fostering self-confidence, providing ample practice opportunities, and developing language proficiency. The study also emphasizes the teacher's role in creating a positive learning environment, echoing Idri's (2011) focus on reducing FNE. Through these elements from both studies, interpreter training programs can create a more supportive learning environment that addresses the emotional aspects of learning and prepares future interpreters for the challenges of the profession.

7.2 Gap between recognition and practice

Despite the acknowledged importance of EI, a significant gap exists between recognition and integration into training programs. While interpreters demonstrate baseline EI skills, the interviews revealed a predominant focus on language proficiency over EI development in most programs. This mirrors observations made by Valero-Garcés (2006) and Baistow (2000), who found a lack of emphasis on emotional and psychological aspects in interpreter training. This emphasis on language skills, often due to time constraints and limited resources, leaves little room for dedicated EI training, potentially explaining the lower scores observed in emotional expression and stress management in the EQ-i data.

8. Limitations and recommendations

8.1 Limitations of the study

Several challenges to integrating EI into KSA interpreter training programs were identified:

- **Limited Time:** The packed curricula of interpreting programs often prioritize language skills over EI development.
- **Lack of Trained Instructors:** Many instructors may not have formal training in EI or expertise in integrating it into their teaching.
- **Valid Assessment Methods:** Developing robust tools to measure EI and its impact on interpreting performance remains a challenge.

8.2 Recommendations for enhancing interpreter emotional intelligence

To overcome these challenges and enhance EI in interpreter training, this study recommends a multi-faceted approach:

- **Faculty Training:** Provide comprehensive training to faculty members on EI principles, assessment tools, and pedagogical strategies for integrating EI into the curriculum.
- **Curriculum Development:** Design and implement EI modules throughout the curriculum, incorporating experiential learning activities like role-plays, simulations, and

reflective exercises.

- **Collaboration:** Partner with EI experts to develop culturally relevant training materials and assessment tools tailored to the specific needs of interpreters in KSA.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Encourage interpreters to engage in ongoing professional development to refine their EI skills and stay updated on best practices.

Interpreter training programs in KSA can promote a new generation of emotionally intelligent interpreters who are not only linguistically proficient but also equipped to handle the emotional and psychological demands of their profession. This, in turn, can lead to more accurate, empathetic, and culturally sensitive interpretations, ultimately enhancing communication and understanding in diverse settings.

9. Conclusions

Intentionally including EI in interpreter training programs can more likely help interpreters to be better prepared to direct the complexities of emotional expression and understanding in their work, eventually leading to more truthful and impactful interpretations. This intentional inclusion can also contribute to the overall professionalism and competency of interpreters, positioning them to succeed in varied and high-pressure settings commonly encountered in the field of interpreting within KSA. However, to this point, the psychological factors have not been given appropriate attention while training specialists in the fields of translation and interpreting. According to Robinson (2007), “translators need to be able not only to perform both subliminal speed-translating and conscious analytical problem-solving, but also to shift from one to the other when the situation requires it (and also to recognize when the situation does require it)”.

Promising strategies for integrating EI into training programs emerged from the interviews carried out at this juncture, including interactive exercises, a focus on active listening, and collaborative learning environments. However, challenges such as resource constraints, a lack of trained instructors, limited timeframes, and potential resistance from some educators must be addressed.

In conclusion, this study unequivocally highlights the vital role of EI in interpreter training within KSA. If integrating targeted EI training into curricula is made possible,

future interpreters will be equipped with the EI necessary to excel in the demanding field of consecutive interpretation. This holistic approach promises more accurate, culturally sensitive, and impactful interpretations, ultimately fostering better cross-cultural communication in a globalized world.

We end the paper with future perspectives as an invitation to other researchers to address important issues.

9.1 Further Research Possibilities:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to measure the impact of integrating EI training on interpreter performance in KSA.
- Investigate the relationship between EI and interpreting quality/performance.
- Develop and validate culturally appropriate assessment tools for measuring EI in KSA’s interpreter population.
- Design and implement targeted EI training modules specifically personalized to the needs of consecutive interpreters in KSA.
- Explore the effectiveness of different training delivery methods (e.g., online vs. in-person) for enhancing EI in interpreter education.
- Investigate the long-term benefits of EI training on interpreter career satisfaction and professional development.

Finally, we can further refine interpreter training programs in Saudi Arabia, confirming that future interpreters possess the EI and other essential skills needed to prosper in the increasingly complex and interconnected global landscape.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, AA and MZ; Methodology, MZ, Resources, AA, MZ, Writing-Original Draft, MZ, and AA; Writing-Review & editing, AA and MZ; Supervision, AA and MZ; Project administration, AA; Acquisition, AA and MZ.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

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Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (IRB approval number: HAP-01-R-059).

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Appendix A. Emotional intelligence scale

Schutte, N.S., Malouff, J.M., Hall, L.E., et al., 1998. Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 25(2), 167–177. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(98\)00001-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(98)00001-4)

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which each item applies to you using the following scale:

- 1-strongly disagree
- 2-disagree
- 3-neither disagree nor agree
- 4-agree
- 5-strongly agree

Appendix B. Interview protocol

I. Background Information:

1. Can you tell us about your experience in teaching interpreter training courses, particularly in the context of consecutive interpretation within KSA?
2. How familiar are you with the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and its relevance to interpreter training, especially within the KSA context?
3. Have you incorporated any elements of EI into your teaching practices or curriculum when teaching consecutive interpretation in KSA?

II. Understanding of Emotional Intelligence:

4. What is your understanding of emotional intelligence and its relevance to interpreter training, specifically within KSA?
5. In your opinion, what specific EI skills are important for interpreters to develop within the KSA context?

III. Integration of EI into Training:

6. Have you encountered any challenges in integrating EI into interpreter training programs, particularly in the teaching of interpretation within KSA?
7. What strategies have you found effective in teaching and developing EI skills among interpreter students, specifically focusing on interpretation training within KSA?
8. How do you assess students' progress in developing EI skills during interpreter training sessions within KSA?

IV. Benefits and Impact:

9. In your experience, what are the potential benefits of incorporating EI into interpreter training programs, specifically within the KSA context of interpretation?
10. Have you observed any positive outcomes or changes in students' performance as a result of integrating EI into interpretation training?

V. Barriers and Challenges:

11. What barriers or challenges do you foresee in fully integrating EI into interpreter training programs within KSA?
12. How do you address resistance or skepticism from students or colleagues regarding the importance of EI in interpreter training?
13. Based on your experience, what recommendations would you provide for enhancing the integration of EI into interpreter training programs within KSA?
14. How do you envision the future of interpreter training in KSA in terms of incorporating EI?

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.					
2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them					
3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.					
4. Other people find it easy to confide in me.					
5. I find it hard to understand the nonverbal messages of other people.					
6. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.					
7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.					
8. Emotions are some of the things that make my life worth living.					
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.					
10. I expect good things to happen.					
11. I like to share my emotions with others.					
12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.					
13. I arrange events others enjoy.					
14. I seek out activities that make me happy.					
15. I am aware of the nonverbal messages I send to others.					
16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.					
17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.					
18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.					
19. I know why my emotions change.					
20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.					
21. I have control over my emotions.					
22. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.					
23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on					
24. I compliment others when they have done something well.					
25. I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send.					
26. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.					
27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.					
28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.					
29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.					
30. I help other people feel better when they are down.					
31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.					
32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.					
33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.					

أسئلة المقابلة مع أساتذات الترجمة المتبعية

Interview questions

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to gather insights from experienced teachers like yourself regarding the integration of emotional intelligence (EI) into interpreter training programs in the context of teaching consecutive interpretation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Your perspectives and experiences are invaluable in understanding the impact of EI on interpreter training and identifying potential areas for improvement.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the interview process. Your responses will be anonymized and used solely for research purposes to contribute to the understanding and enhancement of interpreter training programs in KSA by incorporating EI principles.

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