



## The Importance of Psychological Qualities in Building Translation Quality

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### Abstract

This study examines the psychological qualities that contribute to enhance building translation quality among trainee translators. Specifically, it investigates the importance of psychological qualities, such as intuition, emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and critical thinking in enhancing the building of translation quality, while identifying hindering psychological qualities, such as low interpersonal competence, isolation, emotional Dysregulation emotional, lack of attention and responsibility, and poor communication, that impede building trainee translators' quality. Drawing on translation studies and cognitive psychology, the study adopts a qualitative approach, following the hypothesis of Hobcher-Davidson (2013, 2016) that supportive and hindering psychological qualities can either enhance or impede the building of translation quality. The sample consists of 304 third-year trainees' translators (2025-2026), morning studies in the Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Basra. The trainee translators have been provided with 20 short diplomatic and political texts to be translated from English into Arabic within the lecture time by their instructor, the researcher. The data is selected for their richness in cultural references and complexity. It is used to assess the trainees' translation quality. The trainee translators were allowed to use paper bilingual dictionaries. The results show that the supportive psychological qualities are important for building translation quality, while hindering psychological qualities impedes building trainees' translation quality. Therefore, it is recommended that training translation students in translator training programs that integrate the development of qualities, with a focus on emotional intelligence, self-regulation, intuition, and critical thinking, enhances the building of the translation quality and produces culturally sensitive translations.

**Keywords:** Hobcher-Davidson's Supportive and Hindering Psychological Qualities, Psychological Qualities, diplomatic and political Texts, Translator Training, Translation Quality



## أهمية الصفات النفسية في بناء جودة الترجمة

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### المستخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة الصفات النفسية مثل التركيز على الذكاء العاطفي والتنظيم الذاتي والحدس والتفكير النقدي في تعزيز بناء الترجمة الفعال لدى المترجمين المبتدئين. وتحديداً، تستقصي أهمية الصفات النفسية، مثل الحدس والذكاء العاطفي والتنظيم الذاتي والتفكير النقدي، في دعم بناء جودة الترجمة، مع تحديد الصفات النفسية المعيقة، مثل انخفاض الكفاءة الشخصية والانعزال واضطراب التنظيم العاطفي وقلة الانتباه والمسؤولية وسوء التواصل، التي تعيق بناء جودة الطلبة المترجمين المبتدئين. وبالاعتماد على دراسات الترجمة وعلم النفس المعرفي، تتبنى الدراسة نهجاً نوعياً وفقاً لافتراض هوبشر- ديفيدسون (٢٠١٣، ٢٠١٦) بأن الصفات النفسية الداعمة والمعيقة يمكن أن تدعم أو تعيق بناء أداء المترجمين. تتكون العينة من ٣٠٤ متدرب من المرحلة الثالثة في قسم الترجمة - كلية الآداب - جامعة البصرة - الدراسة الصباحية-العام الأكاديمي ٢٠٢٥-٢٠٢٦. وقد زود المتدربين بعشرين نصاً دبلوماسياً وسياسياً قصيراً، تم اختيارها لثرائها بالإشارات الثقافية وصعوبتها لكي يتم ترجمتها من قبل الطلبة المتدربين من اللغة الإنكليزية إلى اللغة العربية. وتم السماح للطلبة المبتدئين المستخدمين في العينة المذكورة باستخدام قواميس ورقية ثنائية اللغة. تشير النتائج إلى أن الحدس والذكاء العاطفي والتنظيم الذاتي والتفكير النقدي ضرورية لبناء أداء الترجمة الفعال، في حين أن انخفاض الكفاءة الشخصية والانعزال واضطراب التنظيم العاطفي وقلة الانتباه والمسؤولية وسوء التواصل تعوق بناء جودة المترجمين المبتدئين. لذلك، يوصى بأن تدريب طلاب الترجمة على برامج تدريب المترجمين لدمج تطوير المهارات النفسية، مع التركيز على الذكاء العاطفي والتنظيم الذاتي والحدس والتفكير النقدي، يعزز بناء جودة الترجمة وإنتاج ترجمات فعالة وحساسة ثقافياً. وأن الصفات النفسية المعيقة، مثل انخفاض الكفاءة الشخصية والانعزال واضطراب التنظيم العاطفي وقلة الانتباه والمسؤولية وسوء التواصل تعيق بناء جودة الطلبة المترجمين المبتدئين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الصفات النفسية الداعمة والمعيقة لهوبشر- ديفيدسون، الصفات النفسية، تدريب المترجمين، جودة الترجمة

## 1. Introduction

Translation is a complex task that requires linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, technical skill, and psychological qualities. This study explores the psychological qualities that support or hinder translation quality, drawing on perspectives from translation studies and cognitive psychology (see Table (1) below).

The translators' psychological characteristics such as emotional intelligence, flexibility, and adaptability influence their behavior as well as the quality of translation. Emotional intelligence assists in dealing with stress and communicating effectively (Fujita, 2023).

Flexibility of cognition helps the translator to be flexible with the new information received, see the problem in a different way and analyze the matter from various perspectives (Rojo and Caro, 2016). Bad psychological traits such as anxiety, impulsivity, and inflexibility can influence translation quality. Anxiety distracts the translator and influences working memory, which brings perfectionism and avoidance as outcomes (Fujita, 2023). Impulsivity causes rash actions and lack of checking.

It is necessary to acknowledge and solve the problems in psychology that hinder the process of good translation. Those translators who are resilient, mindful, and ethically responsible will be able to use technology not as a way out but as a tool (Moorkens, 2018).

This study argues that psychological qualities play a critical role in shaping translation quality and highlights the need to integrate psychosocial qualities development into translator training programs. It seeks to answer the following question: How can translator training programs be designed to integrate the psychosocial qualities development and the building of translation quality?

**Table (1)**

*Some Psychological Qualities Supporting and Hindering the Translation Quality*

Psychological Qualities Supporting the Translation Quality	Psychological Qualities Hindering the Translation Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intuition</li> <li>- Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>- Self-Regulation</li> <li>- Critical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low Interpersonal Competence (Rudeness)</li> <li>- Isolation</li> <li>- Emotional Dysregulation</li> </ul>

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Related Works

From a psychological perspective, several qualities contribute to translation quality. These qualities relate to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral abilities during the translation process. Critical thinking is a key and important concept in cognitive psychology. Although the importance of this core area of cognitive psychology has grown over time, its field of study has not been properly investigated. The study of internal mental processes reflects a relatively new, stimulating, and interesting research perspective (Wang, 2020). As Sternberg (1986) stated, critical thinking is “the mental processes, strategies, and representations that people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts”. Several studies have explored the relationship between critical thinking and various types of cognitive abilities, ranging from writing to reading (e.g., Yildirim & Soylemez, 2018).

Furthermore, as a key component of cognitive psychology, critical thinking can play a pivotal role in any process that requires cognitive and perceptual skills, such as translation. According to the National Translation Network, a competent translator must possess a range of skills, including professionalism, communication skills, accuracy, flexibility, time management skills, writing skills, general knowledge, analytical ability, subject matter familiarity, curiosity, foreign language proficiency, computer skills, the ability to grasp ideas quickly, strong cultural awareness, a love of reading, and research skills. Most of these qualities such as flexibility, organizational skills, accuracy, analytical ability, research skills, and curiosity require deep understanding and advanced thinking skills (Azin & Heydari Tabrizi, 2016).

Self-regulation in translation refers to a translator's ability to manage their behavior, thoughts, and emotions to improve their work quality. This includes several key elements, such as staying focused on translation tasks without succumbing to distractions, interruptions, or external pressures.

The purpose of this research was to give a thorough insight into the significance of psychological attributes in the quality of translation as well as to devise appropriate techniques to improve translators' performance.

## 3. The Analytical Part

### 3.1 Methodology of the Study

The effects of psychological qualities on translation quality in the context of sensitive texts will be studied using a qualitative approach. The objective is to examine the role played by these personality traits in promoting or preventing the formation of translation quality among the trainee translators

based on the hypothesis proposed by Hobcher-Davidson (2013, 2016). This study uses a sample size of 304 trainee translators/morning studies of academic year 2025-2026. The trainees have been provided with 20 diplomatic and political short texts by their instructor of the course/ the researcher. These texts are required to be translated from English into Arabic within the lecture time. The data is selected for their richness in cultural references and complexity. It is used to assess trainees' translation quality. The trainees were allowed to use paper bilingual dictionaries.

Evaluation of translation performance of the third-year trainees was conducted based on Translation Performance Assessment (TPA) criteria. The criteria were used in finding out psychological features that facilitated and hindered the creation of quality translations. With a view to improving translation quality by the trainees, the study has taken into account various facilitating and hindering psychological features in the process of translation, including:

- Positive psychological qualities: intuition, emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and critical thinking.
- Negative psychological qualities: Low interpersonal competence (rudeness), isolation, Emotional Dysregulation (aggression or hostile reactions), lack of attention and responsibility (negligence), and poor communication.

#### 4. Results

Building on hypothesis of Hobcher-Davidson (2013, 2016), this study has explored the psychological qualities that contribute to translation quality among trainee translators. The third-year trainees' translation tasks were evaluated using (TPA) criteria, which assesses accuracy, fluency, and coherence.

##### *Supporting qualities:*

- Intuition: It helped the trainees make quick and accurate decisions, even in the face of ambiguity or uncertainty. For example, one trainee rendered "The two leaders held a frank discussion" as "The two leaders discussed the honest conversation," demonstrating that intuition helped the trainee choose the correct translation for "frank discussion."
- Emotional intelligence: It helped trainees manage their emotions and produce more accurate translations. For example, trainees translated the phrase "The victims' family members were devastated by the news" into "The victims' family members were extremely sad to hear the news,"

meaning that emotional intelligence helped the trainees control their emotions and make an accurate translation.

- Self regulation: This technique helped trainees to manage their time and produce more precise translations. For example, one trainee found that fatigue was causing errors, so he took a break and rearranged his tasks, thus improving his concentration and accuracy of translation.

- Critical thinking: It was instrumental in enabling trainee to think about options and make decisions despite any ambiguities or bias in the source term. For instance, instead of the sentence and avoided its direct translation" Trainees used critical thinking to evaluate connotations and context so that they choose the best after assessing meaning in the dictionary, expectations of the audience, and the genre. This shows how critical thinking enables trainee translators to assess problems, compare options, and defend their decisions instead of relying on surface equivalents

#### *Hindering qualities:*

-Low interpersonal competence (roughness): It reduced personal competence led to difficulty in teamwork and reduced cooperation. For example, trainees responded to a colleague's suggestion by saying, "That is not a good idea," hindering teamwork.

-Isolation: It made it difficult to get help and resulted in lower-quality translations. For example, trainees did not ask for help when faced with an ambiguous phrase, resulting in an inaccurate translation.

- Emotional Disruption (Aggression): It hindered the production of accurate translations. For example, trainees rendered a sentence in an aggressive tone, altering the original meaning.

## **5. Discussion**

Based on hypothesis of Hobcher-Davidson (2013, 2016), it is indicated that psychological qualities play a significant role in the trainees' translation quality. It is found that the third-year trainee translators' intuition, emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and critical thinking are qualities that support their translation quality, while their low interpersonal competence, isolation, emotional distress, lack of attention and responsibility, and poor communication are qualities that hinder it.

#### *Supporting qualities:*

Example (1)

Source text: "The two leaders held a frank discussion."

Target text: "ناقش القائدان المحادثة الصادقة."

Analysis of the researcher: Intuition helped translators recognize the correct meaning of ambiguous phrases without overanalyzing. For example, trainees translating "The two leaders held a frank discussion" quickly rendered it as "The two leaders held a frank discussion" instead of the literal "Frank discussion". Intuition flagged that "frank" here describes the type of discussion, not honesty of a conversation. "Frank discussion" was later validated by the instructor as correct because it follows Arabic collocation as well as the political climate at that point in time. This is an example of how intuition allows translators to go with their gut feel about the most natural translation without falling into the trap of literal word-for-word choices.

#### Example (2)

Source text: "She gave him a cold shoulder"

Target text: "قابلته بجفاء"

Analysis of the researcher: Involvement of the intuition in helping the translators understand the meaning and tone as well as the culture-specific elements, which often go missing in the dictionaries, is clear. It can be noted from the example where the translator found the phrase "She gave him a cold shoulder" and recognized that there was more to this phrase than just its literal physical meaning. Instead of translating the phrase as "she gave him a cold shoulder," he translated it as "she met him coldly."

#### Example (3)

Source text: The victims' families were devastated by the news.

Target text: أحست عائلات الضحايا حزن شديد عند سماعهم الخبر.

Analysis of the researcher: Translators use emotional intelligence in managing their emotional response to the emotional source texts, thus preventing possible distortion in the process of translation. When working on translating the phrase "The victims' families were devastated by the news," trainees claimed that they felt very emotional because of the grief in the source text. Instead of letting the emotions dominate the text and make them translate it dramatically, the translators paused for a few seconds, controlled their emotions, and continued translating with more clarity. "The families of the victims felt great sadness when they heard the news" can be considered a good example of how emotional intelligence allows the translators to recognize their emotions and translate the source text

accurately without any drama or exaggeration of emotions.

#### Example (4)

Source text: The company will undergo restructuring in the coming months.

Target text: ستخضع الشركة لإعادة هيكلتها في الأشهر القادمة.

Analysis of the researcher: Self-regulation was an effective way for translators to handle their burnout and keep high accuracy levels while translating long texts. Thus, while working on such a phrase as "The company will undergo restructuring in the coming months," trainees realized that they were losing concentration and making more mistakes because of the long period of time spent on translation. They stopped translation, reorganized their activities into smaller pieces and returned to the task with refreshed mind. Thanks to this strategy, they managed to translate the phrase into "The company will undergo restructuring in the coming months" and not to make a mistake of "The company continues to restructure."

#### Example (5)

Source text: "The regime cracked down on protestors"

Target text: "قمعت السلطة المحتجين"

Analysis of the researcher: Critical thinking has enabled the translators to challenge the meanings that arise at the onset and eliminate any form of ideological bias in such a situation. In one case, the trainees have used critical thinking to challenge the connotations associated with the words "regime" and "system" used in the translation of "the regime's repression of the demonstrators" because they wanted to be impartial about it. After analyzing the possible effect on the audience of Iraq, the translator has selected the phrase "the regime's repression of the demonstrators" in order to be neutral and accurate in their work. Through such a process, the translators have been able to eliminate any bias in the translation of texts.

#### *Hindering qualities:*

##### Example (1)

Low interpersonal skills affected the process of interaction and made translation low-quality. As an illustration, while working on their team revision assignment, a trainee decided to translate "stakeholders" by "أصحاب المصلحة". One of the colleagues suggested that the phrase "الجهات المعنية" could be used in the given situation. The trainee refused this option in a very rude way: "That is not a good idea" = "هذه ليست فكرة جيدة" without giving any explanation to his colleagues.

Analysis of the researcher: The trainee's rudeness interferes with the process of collaboration and cooperation and prevents the provision of feedback.

Analysis of the researcher: The trainee's rudeness interferes with the process of collaboration and cooperation.

#### Example (2)

Isolation affected the quality of the translation since translators were unable to consult others in case of doubt. For instance, one trainee translating the sentence, "The bill was tabled until further notice," did not ask other trainees about that particular term. While the word "tabled" may mean "postponed" in American English and "submitted" in British English, the translator produced "تم تقديم مشروع القانون" – "The bill was submitted."

Analysis of the researcher: Isolation of the trainee contributed to the failure of seeking help and producing quality translation. This is because when translators work alone, they fail to clear their doubts, hence retaining the mistakes in the text, which make the translation inaccurate.

#### Example (3)

Inappropriate emotional regulation negatively impacted the precision of the translation through allowing frustration to skew it. For instance, one of the trainees struggled to translate a challenging legal text with "The court dismissed the appeal as frivolous." They were frustrated, hence translated it in an aggressive manner, as "رفضت المحكمة الاستئناف بسخف" – "The court rejected the appeal with contempt". Here, the tone "بسخف/ياحتقار" was introduced in addition to the source which altered its neutral meaning.

Analysis of the researcher: The inability of the trainee to control their emotions had a negative impact on the accuracy of the translation produced by the trainee. This proves that anger and frustration drive translators to add emotions to their translations.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that:

1. The Psychological qualities play a key role in creating quality translation.
2. The Translators' Training program should be geared towards the development of supporting psychological qualities.
3. Knowledge of supporting and restraining psychological qualities may help in enhancing and developing such qualities so that quality translation may be achieved.
4. Psychological qualities help in developing understanding of other cultures.

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