

Séverine Hubscher-Davidson and Caroline Lehr (2021). *Improving the Emotional Intelligence of Translators: a Roadmap for an Experimental Training Intervention*. Palgrave Studies in Translating and Interpreting. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 103, £49.99. ISBN: 978 3030888596.

Talking about emotions in translation and the emotions of translators is a relatively recent phenomenon, albeit not an entirely new one. Arguably, though, it has never been more urgent to do so. Only recently, the Covid-19 pandemic upended our lives. As we struggled to adjust to new and extraordinary circumstances, the pandemic soon became a source of heightened anxiety for most of us – academics, professional translators and trainee translators. Thankfully, technology allowed us to keep the show on the road, to stay connected via screens despite the various lockdowns. Ironically, though, technology also made many of us feel increasingly isolated and disconnected. Now that we have found our way back into something resembling normal, the psychological consequences of those abnormal circumstances seem to linger. One could purport, in fact, that the pandemic merely shone the spotlight on some of the psychological issues we already grappled with. Higher education translator trainers know, for instance, that an ever-growing number of students displayed signs of anxiety even before having to endure prolonged period of social isolation during the various lockdowns. Similarly, pre-pandemic research had already shown how some professional translators can be left feeling both alienated and isolated by the rapid automation of the translation industry and changing production models.

Seen in this light, a book proposing to help improve translators' wellbeing by boosting their emotional intelligence (EI) through training interventions seems both timely and necessary. And there is no doubting the credentials of the two authors of this book, Séverine Hubscher-Davidson and Caroline Lehr. Not only have the two translation scholars already published extensive empirical research on the way emotions can affect translators' work performance in the last decade, but they also bring their own experiences to the book.

Improving the Emotional Intelligence of Translators. A Roadmap for an Experimental Training Intervention forms part of *Palgrave Studies in Translation and Interpreting*, a series edited by Margaret Rogers that seeks to map out an interdisciplinary framework allowing scholars to study the evolving landscape of translation and interpreting practice. Unsurprisingly, this book's contribution to the series is to explore the way Psychology as a field of enquiry can concretely benefit the training of both translators and trainee translators. In the authors' words, its main aim is to "[...] describe how an effective EI intervention tailored to the needs of translators can be carried out" (4). More specifically, these EI interventions have been designed with students (i.e., trainee translators) in mind, although they can

also be used with professional translators. The book's intended readers are therefore primarily translator educators who wish to integrate aspects of EI theory into their training in order to improve their students' future resilience as professional translators. It will also be of interest to professional associations that wish to raise awareness to the importance of emotions for professional translators' wellbeing as part of their CPD offering. Last but not least, the book may also pique the interest of professional translators themselves as they seek to understand how their own "emotional and interpersonal resources" (5) can help them improve their wellbeing.

The volume consists of eight chapters. Chapters 1 to 5 are akin to a literature review in that they lay the theoretical foundations for the proposed interventions. Chapters 6 to 8, however, are more practical in their outlook and discuss potential EI interventions in a concrete way.

In chapter 1, Hubscher-Davidson and Lehr introduce us to the concepts of 'emotions' and 'emotional intelligence' against the backdrop of their proposed interventions. Recent developments in the translation industry, they argue, have required translators to deal with a lot of change and uncertainty. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on how some of them feel about their working conditions and, ultimately, how they perform in the job. The conclusion that readers can draw from reading this chapter is that increasing their EI could help translators learn to manage and express their emotions better, especially "maladaptive emotions" (3).

In chapter 2, the two authors show that their work forms part of an established branch of Translation Studies that borrows concepts and methods from the field of Psychology to study the black box of translators. This branch first emerged in the 1970s and it has since helped shape the contours of what is now known as "Translator Studies". Hubscher-Davidson's and Lehr's research on the impact of emotions on translators' wellbeing and job performance thus builds on some of the existing interdisciplinary research into translators' individual differences, attitudes and personality traits from the last few decades.

Chapter 3 continues with a review of recent studies that confirm "[...] the importance of emotional and relational competencies for the wellbeing and performance success of translators" (17). For instance, research has shown that some translators' lack of assertiveness when it comes to (re)negotiating deadlines is a source of higher stress levels. However, skills such as assertiveness are intrinsically linked to how people feel about themselves and can, therefore, be addressed and further developed through targeted EI interventions.

The EI interventions advocated by Hubscher-Davidson and Lehr are "[...] rooted in personality psychology and trait theory" (21), as explained in chapter 4. This chapter provides a clear rationale for the choice of this theory as the framework for said interventions, namely "[...] the belief that

there are some personality traits and behavioural dispositions that are helpful for translators and others that are less so" (ibid). The rest of the chapter introduces readers to some of the key features of trait EI theory.

The following chapter, chapter 5, draws on extensive empirical studies to evidence the claim that EI traits can be improved through regular interventions. Studies in the field of second language acquisition, for instance, have shown that EI interventions to boost students' positive emotions and wellbeing can enhance language enjoyment and, ultimately, performance. Another study involving students not only evidenced the possibility to boost trait EI facets through interventions, but also the fact that led to "[...] reported improvements in their physical health, mental health, happiness, life satisfaction and global social functioning" (34).

By far the largest chapter, chapter 6 ("Proposed Method") builds on the theoretical overview of the first five chapters to offer educators "[...] a roadmap to follow if they want to undertake an intervention in their teaching programme" (43). One of the implicit objectives of this book is to increase the number of empirical studies that measure the actual ability of interventions to improve translators' trait EI. To this aim, the first section of chapter 6 highlights the limitations in the research design of existing studies and gives some advice on how best to conduct future studies (e.g. participants, tools used to measure EI, suggested design of the interventions). The second section of this chapter, however, shares examples of activities that "[...] draw on integrated models rooted in well-established schools of psychological thought, for example, behaviourism, humanistic and cognitive psychology" (49). Many of the included activities are borrowed from coaching (e.g. 'Silent coaching exercise' for effective questioning, 'Cognitive Behavioural Coaching' aka 'Socratic Questioning', 'GROW model'). This part also contains a call to recognise and discuss translators' boredom in translator training as one of the dominant – but often overlooked – negative emotions that can negatively affect work performance.

Chapter 7 continues with the more practical approach by drawing our attention to some aspects we will need to consider should we want to organise such EI interventions, e.g. the context in which they are taking place and the culture(s) participants are from. This is because "[w]hen it comes to emotion expression, cultural norms, language and context also have a role to play" (74). Chapter 8, entitled "Conclusion and Future Directions", reiterates the authors' call to "publish the content and results of proposed intervention studies so as to have a realistic picture of the efficacy of EI trainings" (80). The Appendix that follows gives a helpful detailed outline of a proposed 18-hour training event for translators over a three-day period, which will no doubt be a very inspiring starting point for anyone wanting to embed EI interventions into their training programmes.

One of the most significant contributions of this book is that it brings the latest research into emotions from Psychology into translator training. It thereby makes an utterly convincing case for the usefulness of EI interventions in translator education. Given what we know about the mental health hazards caused by changing processes and production models for today's translators, this is very timely. Those of us whose job is to train the next generation of professional translators must make sure we equip them with the emotional resources they will need to succeed in the language industry. Written by two of the foremost researchers in the field, Hubscher-Davidson and Lehr's roadmap is an important first step in that direction.

Overall, I thoroughly recommend this book to fellow translator educators, not least for the coaching approach it advocates in chapter 6 (and which could be effective beyond the remit of EI interventions). One should note, though, that most of the examples given in chapter 6 are taken from sessions with professional translators. Even though one can see how these can be applied to trainee translators, it would have been good to have a few more examples of interventions targeting students. Still, this is a very rigorously researched volume which constitutes an excellent starting point for any academic wanting to research and consider specific aspects of emotions in translator education. The book gives a thorough overview of existing research in the field and all chapters are followed by an extensive reference list. It also contains very helpful methodological advice that will no doubt benefit future studies.

JC Penet
Newcastle University
Email: jc.penet@ncl.ac.uk