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## **Comparison of psychological personality tests and their potential use in translation studies**

### **Porównanie wyników psychologicznych testów osobowości oraz ich potencjalnego wykorzystania w studiach translatorskich**

#### **Abstract**

Psychological tests are widely used to assess personality traits and cognitive abilities. However, their potential application in translation studies remains largely unexplored. This overview article aims to compare psychological tests used in identifying personality traits and cognitive abilities that may enhance translators' skills. Personality tests can reveal psychological factors that may be crucial for effective translation. The psychological dimensions are often overlooked despite the acknowledged importance of linguistic and cultural proficiency in translation studies. Emotional responses and personality traits significantly impact translators' decisions and performance, highlighting the need for further research. Implementing tests like the MBTI, DISC, Big Five, and HEXACO Personality Inventory can offer valuable insights. Understanding translators' personality traits can enable strategies for improvement and enhance overall translation outcomes. Bridging the gap in research regarding

psychological dimensions is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of translators' behaviors and improving translation quality.

**Key words:** *psychological tests, psychology, translation studies, translator's personality traits.*

## Abstrakt

Testy psychologiczne są szeroko stosowane do oceny cech osobowości i zdolności poznawczych. Jednak ich potencjalne zastosowanie w tłumaczeniu pozostaje w dużej mierze niezbadane. Celem tego artykułu o charakterze przeglądowym jest porównanie testów psychologicznych stosowanych do identyfikacji cech osobowości i zdolności poznawczych, które mogą zwiększyć umiejętności tłumaczy. Testy osobowości mogą ujawnić czynniki psychologiczne, które mogą mieć kluczowe znaczenie dla skutecznego tłumaczenia. Pomimo uznanego znaczenia biegłości językowej i kulturowej w tłumaczeniu, często pomija się aspekty psychologiczne. Reakcje emocjonalne i cechy osobowości znacząco wpływają na decyzje i wydajność tłumaczy, co podkreśla potrzebę dalszych badań. Wdrożenie testów takich jak MBTI, DISC, Big Five i model HEXACO może dostarczyć cennych spostrzeżeń. Zrozumienie cech osobowości tłumaczy może umożliwić opracowanie strategii ulepszeń i poprawić ogólne wyniki tłumaczenia. Wypełnienie luki w badaniach dotyczących wymiaru psychologicznego jest kluczowe dla pełnego zrozumienia zachowań tłumaczy i poprawy jakości tłumaczeń.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *testy psychologiczne, psychologia, przekładoznawstwo, cechy osobowości tłumacza.*

## Introduction

Psychological tests play a crucial role in various fields, serving as valuable tools for understanding human behavior, cognition, and emotions. (Schweda-Nicholson, 2017) These tests are used in a variety of disciplines such as clinical psychology, education, and neuropsychology. (Smith, 2010) Their importance lies in their ability to provide standardized measures which facilitate comparisons across individuals, groups and cultures, thereby shaping decision-making processes and enhancing our understanding of psychological phenomena. (Mesárošová and Bavolar, 2017)

The main objective of this overview article is to explore the potential application of psychological tests in the translation industry. In this article we will compare psychological tests used to determine translators' personality traits and cognitive abilities in order to improve their translation skills.

Psychological tests are widely used in various fields to assess individuals' personality traits and cognitive abilities. (Bontempo, 2023; Hogan and Hogan, 2017; Vesna, 2011) In the translation industry these tests can provide valuable insights into each translator's unique cognitive characteristics, and they can make possible to identify translators' strengths and weaknesses and provide targeted training and development programs to improve their translation skills.

According to Sakabe et al. (2017), Lehka-Paul and Whyatt (2016), Karimnia and Mahjubi (2013), Tavajoh and Yaqubi (2019) personality assessments can provide understanding into the their preferred work methods and communication styles of translators, where all of these can have a major impact on their job performance. Psychological assessments, when combined with other translation tools and methods, can help translators reach their full potential by identifying their unique personality traits which can impact translation process. Each type of psychological test serves different purposes by using various specific methodologies. A research is needed to explore the effectiveness of psychological testing in the translation industry. However, the preliminary evidence suggests that performing psychological tests can be a useful addition to the translator's toolkit.

## **Psychological Factors Influencing Translations**

In the field of translation studies (TS), there is a noticeable lack of research into the psychological factors that may impact the translation process. (Cozma, Dejica-Carțiș, 2013) While linguistic, cultural, and technological proficiency, critical thinking, adaptability, and ethical competencies are undeniably vital aspects of translation (Albir et. al., 2020), overlooking the psychological dimensions neglects a critical determinant of translators' decision-making processes and overall performance. The lack of research in this area impedes our understanding of how translators' personality traits affect their approaches to translation tasks and interactions within translation teams.

Despite the evident interaction between language, culture, and cognition in translation (Jakobson, 1959; Venuti, 1995), scholarly attention to the psychological aspects of this practice remains limited. Existing literature often acknowledges the intricacies of translation tasks without thoroughly examining the psychological mechanisms that shape translational outcomes. (Shreve and Angelone, 2010) Consequently, the reliability of translation quality may be compromised, as it may not adequately consider the nuanced

psychological processes involved. Thus, there is a clear need for further empirical research into the psychological dimensions of translation, aiming to elucidate the complexities of cognitive, and emotional factors that impact the outcome of translated literary texts.

### **Significance of Personality Traits in Translation Practice**

Personality traits may exert a profound influence on translation practice (Tavajoh and Yaqubi, 2019; Azadipour, 2019; Hubscher-Davidson, 2007; 2009), shaping translators' behaviors, preferences, and responses to the challenges encountered in their work. By recognizing their personality strengths and weaknesses, translators can adopt strategies to leverage their strengths and mitigate their weaknesses, leading to improved translation outcomes and job satisfaction. (Tavajoh and Yaqubi, 2019; Lehka-Paul and Whyatt, 2016)

Moreover, the translator's emotional responses to the content can impact their decisions regarding language, tone, and style, thereby shaping the ultimate translated output. (Ghobadi et al., 2021; Rojo, Ramos 2016, 2018; Kitanovska-Kimovska and Cevtkoski, 2021) The studies of Bednářová-Gibová and Majherová (2023) and Hubscher-Davidson (2013, 2016, 2017, 2021) indicate that the personality characteristics, emotional competence patterns, and emotional intelligence of translators can greatly affect their performance. It suggests that emotional factors such as self-confidence, belief in one's abilities, ability to manage uncertainty, and emotional intelligence can affect the quality of translated work. It also emphasizes the importance of exploring the impact of emotions elicited by texts on translators' processing styles and translation performance. The research by Tabakowska (2016) has looked at how emotions can impact a translator's decision-making, values, cognitive processing styles, and performance. It offers a critical examination of the interplay between emotions and various aspects of the translation process. Examining these emotions, Tabakowska reveals the variety of ways in which translators' emotional states influence how they understand source texts, their language decisions, stylistic preferences, and translation techniques. Her results encourage academics and translators to take a more reflective, holistic approach to translation—one that recognises and addresses the emotional intricacies that are a part of the translator's experience.

This all leads us to the opinion that psychological testing can be useful in examining the personality characteristics of translators, which may affect the quality of the translated work.

## Proposal of Psychological Tests

To study the personality traits of translators, it is necessary to examine their psychological aspects through the use of specialised psychological tests. A variety of frameworks are available for us to help understand different facets of personality, such as: HEXACO Personality Inventory, the DISC Behaviour Test, the Big Five Personality Test, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). When using them, nevertheless, we should act with caution because each test may have limits and may offer a limited understanding of the psychological profiles of the translators.

### Myers-Briggs Personality Tests<sup>1</sup>

A pseudoscientific tool for assessing personality, the Myers-Briggs test was developed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. (Pittenger, 1993) The test was first used in the 1940s and was designed to classify people into one of 16 personality types based on their preferences in four dichotomies: Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I), Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N), Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F), and Judging (J) versus Perception (P). (Quenk, 2010) According to Pratchett (2018), Myers and Myers (1995), and Myers (1998), introversion shows a tendency for isolation whereas extraversion tends towards outward orientation and social contact. Sensing people concentrate on concrete details and facts, whereas intuitive people are more imaginative and focus more on abstract ideas. Feeling types place more emphasis on empathy and subjective values, whereas thinking types prioritise objectivity and rational analysis. Lastly, perceiving types show flexibility and spontaneity, whereas judging types value structure and decisiveness.

The personality traits elucidated by the MBTI can significantly influence translators view onto their approach to translation process. For example, introverted translators may perform better in independent work environment, but there might be a risk of potential excessive isolation which can lead to unpredicted results. On the other hand, extroverted translators may perform better in collaborative environment, but there is a danger of over-reliance on consensus in such kind of group work. Translators with sensing type may be more effective in the translation of texts where the focus on details is crucial. Feeling types of translators may bring a new perspective into the literary translation with its great varieties of translation options. Thinking types may

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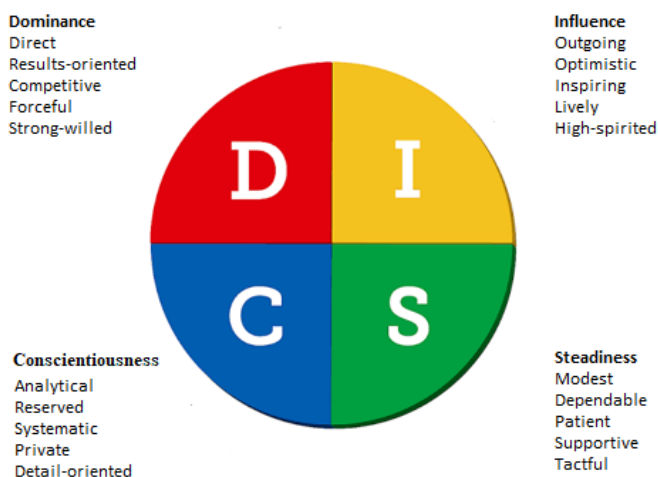
<sup>1</sup> *The 16 MBTI® Personality Types*, [https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/the-16-mbti-personality-types\\_](https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/the-16-mbti-personality-types_), 10.06.2024.

perform better in the topics where rationality regards as of paramount importance.

However, we must mention that the effectiveness of the MBTI in accurately capturing personality traits has been a subject of debate among different psychologists. (Hunsley et al., 2003; Boyle, 1995; Pittenger, 2005) They raise concerns about its reliability and validity as a psychometric tool, as it has a dichotomous nature, and the division of translators into these categories could oversimplify the complexity of a translator's personality, which eventually may lead to misinterpretation. So, we need to take into consideration not only the type of personality but also the influence of a translator's diverse cognitive processes. (Hughes, 1998; Baker and Saldanha, 2019)

### The DiSC Behavior Test

The DiSC Behavior Test, based on the DiSC model of behavior, is a widely used personal assessment tool designed to improve teamwork, communication, and productivity in the workplace (DISC Indra. Research Report, 2003). Developed by William Moulton Marston, the DiSC Behavior Test serves as a tool to assess individuals' behavioral tendencies and preferences in various situations. It categorizes people into one of four personality types based on their responses to the assessment: Dominance (D), Influence (i), Steadiness (S), and (C) (Inscape Publishing, 2003, 2008).



**Figure 1. The DiSC Behavior Test**

The DiSC Behavior Test consists of a series of questions or statements that respondents must rate based on their agreement or preference (Inscape Publishing, 2003, 2008). These items assess various aspects of behavior,

communication style, decision-making process, and interpersonal interactions. (Sugerman, 2009) Through statistical analysis, the test identifies patterns in respondents' responses and assigns them scores across the four DiSC dimensions. (Inscape Publishing, 2003, 2008)

For translators, understanding their own DiSC profile may offer insights into communication styles, conflict resolution approaches, and teamwork dynamics. (Sugerman, 2009) Translators with a dominant profile (D) may tend to be assertive, result-oriented, and decisive. (Prochaska et al., 2015) Also they may excel in leadership roles, project management, and negotiations but may need to balance assertiveness with empathy and inclusivity. They may thrive in challenging situations, value efficiency, and prioritize achieving goals. However, they may need to be mindful of balancing assertiveness with empathy and inclusivity, especially in collaborative translation projects where team dynamics and consensus-building are essential. In translations, they may need to consciously consider the impact of their assertive approach on the tone and reception of the translated content, striving for clarity and effectiveness without compromising on cultural sensitivity or inclusivity.

Individuals with an Influence (I) profile in translation may possess exceptional interpersonal skills that enable them to excel in roles involving client interaction. (Sugerman, 2009) They are sociable, outgoing, and persuasive, and they may be excellent in building relationships, inspiring others, and driving enthusiasm for ideas and initiatives. While they are often optimistic and energetic, they may struggle with attention to detail and may prioritize harmony over conflict resolution. In team settings they can leverage their interpersonal skills to promote collaboration and maintain positive morale. However, translators with an influential profile should be mindful of maintaining attention to detail and accuracy in their translations, as their tendency to prioritize social interactions may sometimes lead to oversight.

Steadiness (S) profile can contribute to team cohesion and support by fostering a harmonious work environment. (Stacey, 2018) Translators with a steady profile may be more reliable, supportive, and cooperative. They may tend to value stability, harmony, and teamwork and often act as mediators in conflicts and provide emotional support to their peers. However, they may need to overcome a reluctance to assert themselves or take initiative in certain situations, particularly when proving their ideas or negotiating terms with others.

The next profile is the Conscientiousness (C) profile, which is characterized by an analytical, detail-oriented, and methodical approach. (Inscape Publishing, 2003, 2008) Translators with a conscientious profile may prioritize accuracy, quality, and adherence to procedures, striving for perfection in their work. Their analytical approach may allow them to identify potential challenges or ambiguities in source texts and address them effectively. However, translators with a conscientious profile may sometimes prioritize perfectionism over

efficiency, leading to delays in project completion or reluctance to delegate tasks. They may benefit from finding a balance between thoroughness and timeliness to optimize their productivity without compromising quality. While they excel in tasks that require precision and expertise, they may struggle with flexibility, risk-taking, and interpersonal relationships.

Still, in academic and professional contexts, we must consider it crucial to approach the DiSC model with a critical lens, acknowledging its limitations and potential biases while recognizing their utility as tools for self-awareness and interpersonal development. (Sugerman, 2009) The DiSC model may provide a structured framework for understanding a translator's behavior in the workplace, offering opportunities for self-awareness and professional development; however, success is dependent upon critical interpretation, due to individual variances and specific settings in an organization.

### **Big 5 Personality Traits Test<sup>1</sup>**

The Big Five Personality Test, also known as “the five-factor model of personality” or “the OCEAN model”, is a widely used psychological assessment tool designed to evaluate an individual's self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003; Kabigting, 2021) Developed in the 1980s, this test categorizes personality into five major dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. (Roccas et al., 2002) Each dimension consists of specific traits that describe various aspects of an individual's personality (Hodgkinson and Gill, 2015; Soto and Kronauer and Liang, 2015; McCrae and John, 1992):

- **Openness to Experience:** This dimension assesses an individual's appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, and curiosity. It evaluates intellectual curiosity, creativity, and willingness to explore new ideas.
- **Conscientiousness:** Conscientiousness measures self-discipline, organization, and goal-directed behavior. It indicates whether an individual is reliable, responsible, and diligent in their actions.
- **Extraversion:** Extraversion reflects an individual's sociability, assertiveness, and energy level in social settings. It distinguishes between outgoing, energetic individuals and introverted, reserved ones.
- **Agreeableness:** This dimension assesses an individual's tendency to be cooperative, empathetic, and considerate of others. It measures friendliness, compassion, and willingness to compromise.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bigfive-test*. <https://bigfive-test.com>, 10.06.2024.



- **Neuroticism:** Neuroticism evaluates emotional stability versus instability. It measures susceptibility to negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

The personality traits identified by the Big Five Personality Test may impact translators in various ways. Extraversion may influence a style of translation, with more extroverted individuals being comfortable in social interactions and networking, while introverted translators may prefer solitary work environments. Conscientiousness may be crucial for translators as it reflects their level of organization, attention to detail, and adherence to deadlines. Highly conscientious translators are likely to produce accurate and timely translations. Agreeableness plays a role in translators' interactions with clients, and colleagues. Agreeable translators are more likely to foster positive relationships and resolve conflicts effectively. Neuroticism may affect translators' ability to cope with the pressures of the job. Highly neurotic individuals may experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, potentially impacting their performance and well-being.



**Figure 2. *The Big Five Personality Test***

Compared to other personality assessment tools, the Big Five Personality Test may offer several advantages to translators: comprehensiveness, as it provides a holistic view of personality, capturing a broad range of characteristics relevant to translators' professional and personal lives; research support, with extensive empirical evidence demonstrating its validity and reliability across diverse populations and settings, enhancing confidence in the test results and their applicability to real-world scenarios; and predictive power, as the Big Five traits have been linked to various outcomes such as job performance, leadership effectiveness, and interpersonal relationships, making the test valuable for understanding translators' potential strengths and areas for development. (Kabigting, 2021; Roccas et al., 2002)

## The HEXACO Personality Inventory<sup>1</sup>

The Hexaco Personality Inventory was introduced in 2000 as an improvement of prior personality frameworks, specifically the Big Five traits. In contrast to conventional personality assessments, the HPI emphasizes scholarly thoroughness and provides a detailed analysis of individual personality characteristics and is considered unique because it adds the honesty-humility dimension. (Ashton et al., 2004; Ashton and Lee, 2007)

The Hexaco Personality Inventory (HPI) is a comprehensive measure designed to assess six major dimensions of personality: Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O) (Ashton and Lee, 2007). The HPI, which was developed from lexical research and is based on the lexical hypothesis, offers a sophisticated knowledge of individual differences and is particularly useful from an academic perspective (Ashton et al., 2004). Each dimension includes aspects and related descriptive words, enabling a detailed evaluation of unique variations. (Ashton and Lee, 2009)



**Figure 3. The six HEXACO personality traits**

The HPI can help translators identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to focus their professional development efforts in a more effective manner. The HEXACO model can evaluate translators' agreeableness, honesty-humility, and emotionality levels, providing insights into their social behavior, creativity, and risk-taking tendencies. Understanding these traits can also help predict their academic performance, cognitive abilities, job satisfaction, ethical decision-making, and psychological well-being.

<sup>1</sup> HEXACO-PI-R. [https://survey.ucalgary.ca/jfe/form/SV\\_0icFBjWwyHvJOfA](https://survey.ucalgary.ca/jfe/form/SV_0icFBjWwyHvJOfA), 10.06.2024.

Future research could focus on refining assessment methods to mitigate response biases and enhance the cross-cultural validity of personality assessments. Additionally, studies could explore the stability of personality traits over time and their implications for translation practice. Additionally, translation training programs could integrate personality assessments into curriculum development, helping translators recognize their strengths and weaknesses and tailor their professional development accordingly.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the exploration of psychological personality tests and their potential use in translation studies unveils a promising avenue for enhancing the understanding of translators' behaviors and translation decision-making process. By delving into the intricacies of personality traits and cognitive abilities, translators can gain valuable insights into their strengths and weaknesses and use them more effectively in their work.

Psychological tests such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the DiSC Behavior Test, the Big Five Personality Test, and the HEXACO Personality Inventory can offer structured frameworks for assessing translators' personality profiles and understanding their implications in translation practice. However, it is essential to approach the application of psychological tests in translation practice with caution, considering their limitations and potential biases. Further research is warranted to validate the effectiveness of psychological testing in the translation industry and refine assessment methods to ensure their reliability and cross-cultural validity.

By bridging the gap in research regarding psychological dimensions in translation studies, scholars and practitioners can foster a more comprehensive understanding of translators' behaviors and advance the field towards greater excellence and professionalism.

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