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THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the actual problems of translators' professional ethics; arguments in favour of formulating and extending the common translators' code of ethics; general translation etiquette elements and the Code of Ethics as a disciplinary rule for the professional conduct of translators and interpreters.

KEYWORDS: *Translation, Interpretation, Professional Ethics, Code Of Ethics, Professionalism, Accuracy And Fidelity, Confidentiality, Accountability, Continued Competence, Impartiality, Authenticity.*

INTRODUCTION

Interpreting and translation are unregulated activities in most countries, yet interpreters and translators perform challenging work in sensitive domains, such as the law, medicine and business. When they face ethical challenges in their work, they can access ongoing support. They must undertake regular refresher training in ethics. Currently, the issue of the translators' ethics is not idle. This is primarily due to the training and education of future translators or interpreters, who, after graduating from higher educational institutions, will carry out their translation activities, interact with other translators, customers as well as all participants of the translation process. The success and quality of the translation equally depends on the competency of a translator or an interpreter and impeccable adherence to ethical norms and rules. So, what is ethics? Ethics is a system of moral principles, the rules of conduct (behavior) recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture^[1].

Translation ethics is a set of unwritten rules of conduct for a translator in the course of professional activity, primarily in relations with the customer of the translation, other participants in the translated event, as well as with fellow translators. The existing translation ethics is focused on creating a positive image of the translator in the eyes of the customer. Compliance

with these unwritten rules and regulations increases the assurance that (all other things being equal) the client will re-invite this particular translator the next time.

Furthermore, translation ethics primarily means correctness, commitment and confidentiality. The professional ethics of a translator is not only his (her) relationship with people, but in general the attitude of the translator (interpreter) to their professional duties. Nevertheless, the issue of whether a translator is obliged to translate inclusions from other languages found in the original text can hardly be legitimately attributed to ethics. Rather, it refers to the rules for working with text in translation.

No professional code of conduct, no guidelines or rules can cover all the situations that a practicing translator finds himself in on a daily basis. But they can serve as a guideline for him, a starting point for a more balanced choice of behavior in a particular case.

Consequently, what does code of ethics mean? A [code of ethics](#), also referred to as an "ethical code" or "code of conduct", is a set of official standards of conduct that the members of a group are expected to uphold^[2]. Code of ethics could also refer to an individual's personal values or sense of right and wrong. It is a guide of principles designed to help professionals conduct practical activity honestly and with integrity. All companies will have a different code of ethics with different areas of interest based on the industry they are involved in, but the five areas that companies typically focus on include confidentiality, integrity, objectivity, professional competence, and professional behavior^[3].

The Code of Ethics is intended to regulate the professional conduct of translators and interpreters. Nowadays, a large number of agencies, institutions, language service providers and purchasers of interpreting and translating services require practitioners who work with them to adhere to the Code of Ethics. It is recognized as setting a general standard for interpreting and translating. The following Code of Ethics defines the values and principles guiding the decisions interpreting and translating professionals make in practice:

- 1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT** - Interpreters and translators take responsibility for their work and conduct; they are committed to providing quality service in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner, dealing honestly and fairly with other parties and colleagues, and dealing honestly in all business practices. They disclose any conflict of interest or any matter that may compromise their impartiality. They observe common professional ethics of diligence and responsiveness to the needs of other participants in their work.
- 2. CONFIDENTIALITY** - Interpreters and translators maintain confidentiality and do not disclose information acquired in the course of their work. Interpreters and translators are bound by strict rules of confidentiality, as are the persons they work with in professional or business fields.
- 3. COMPETENCE** – Interpreters and translators only undertake work they are competent to perform in the languages for which they are professionally qualified through training and credentials.
- 4. IMPARTIALITY** – Interpreters and translators observe impartiality in all professional contacts. They remain unbiased throughout the communication exchanged between the participants in any interpreted encounter. Translators do not show bias towards either the author of the source text or the intended readers of their translation. Interpreters and

translators play an important role in facilitating parties who do not share a common language to communicate effectively with each other. They aim to ensure that the full intent of the communication is conveyed. Interpreters and translators are not responsible for what the parties communicate, only for complete and accurate transfer of the message. They do not allow bias to influence their performance; likewise they do not soften, strengthen or alter the messages being conveyed.

5. **ACCURACY** – Interpreters and translators use their best professional judgment in remaining faithful at all times to the meaning of texts and messages.
6. **CLARITY OF ROLE BOUNDARIES-** Interpreters and translators maintain clear boundaries between their task as facilitators of communication through message transfer and any tasks that may be undertaken by other parties involved in the assignment.
7. **MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS** – Interpreters and translators are responsible for the quality of their work, whether as employees, freelance practitioners or contractors with interpreting and translation agencies. They always endeavour to secure satisfactory working conditions for the performance of their duties, including physical facilities, appropriate briefing, a clear commission, and clear conduct protocols where needed in specific institutional settings. They ensure that they have allocated adequate time to complete their work; they foster a mutually respectful business relationship with the people with whom they work and encourage them to become familiar with the interpreter or translator role.
8. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** – Interpreters and translators continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills. Practitioners commit themselves to lifelong learning, recognizing that individuals, services and practices evolve and change over time. They continually upgrade their language and transfer skills and their contextual and cultural understanding. They keep up to date with the technological advances pertinent to their practice in order to continue to provide quality service. Practitioners working in languages where there is no standard training or credential may need to assess, maintain and update their standards independently.
9. **PROFESSIONAL SOLIDARITY** - Interpreters and translators respect and support their fellow professionals, and they uphold the reputation and trustworthiness of the profession of interpreting and translating.

Finally, it may be concluded that, general translation etiquets, basic rules of behavior of interpreters compiled into the “moral code” of interpreters as well as some important ethical principles are as follows:

1. An interpreter is a “translator”, who rearranges (transforms) the oral text in the source language into the text in the target language.
2. An interpreter has no right to change the source text at his own will, to compress or to expand it, unless such compression or expansion is conditioned by the context, or requested by the client.
3. An interpreter by using professional techniques and tools of interpreting always seeks to render the invariant of the source message as exactly as possible and bears professional, moral

and even legal responsibility for the equivalence of interpretation. However, the interpreter bears no responsibility for what is being said by the source speaker.

4. An interpreter must always be impartial and neutral in terms of political, cultural, ethnic, religious or gender views of all parties to the negotiations (talks, conferences, round tables, etc) even if the interpreter does not share or support these views.

5. An interpreter has no right to intervene into the relationships of the parties to negotiations, to express his or her attitude towards the contents of what is being interpreted or “prompt” anything to the speakers.

6. An interpreter shall comply with the confidentiality and professional integrity requirements and has no right to publicly disclose the contents of what is being interpreted. However, if the conference is of an open character, is widely covered by the mass media or if its materials have been declassified, the interpreter may use the materials of the conference for teaching or other non-profit making purposes after two years have passed since the date the conference was held.

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