

ETHICS OF A TRANSLATOR: PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Annotation: This article examines the ethical responsibilities of translators and the importance of professional behavior when working with multilingual communication. It highlights such key ethical principles as confidentiality, accuracy, neutrality, and respect for cultural differences. The study emphasizes that adhering to professional standards helps translators build trust, prevent misunderstandings, and ensure the integrity of communication between parties.

Keywords: translation ethics, professional behavior, confidentiality, accuracy, neutrality, communication.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются этические обязанности переводчиков и важность профессионального поведения при работе с многоязычной коммуникацией. Особое внимание уделяется основным этическим принципам: конфиденциальности, точности, нейтральности и уважению культурных различий. Подчёркивается, что соблюдение профессиональных стандартов способствует укреплению доверия, предотвращению недопонимания и сохранению целостности общения.

Ключевые слова: этика переводчика, профессиональное поведение, конфиденциальность, точность, нейтральность, коммуникация.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada tarjimonlarning axloqiy mas’uliyatlari va ko‘p tilli muloqot jarayonida professional xulq-atvorning ahamiyati yoritiladi. Asosiy axloqiy tamoyillar — maxfiylik, aniqlik, betaraflik hamda madaniy farqlarga hurmat masalalari ko‘rib chiqiladi. Professional standartlarga rioya qilish ishonchni mustahkamlashi, noto‘g‘ri tushunishlarning oldini olishi va muloqotning to‘g‘riligini ta’minlashi ta’kidlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: tarjimon etikasi, professional xulq-atvor, maxfiylik, aniqlik, betaraflik, muloqot.

Introduction

Translation is a complex and responsible professional activity that goes beyond merely converting words from one language to another. Translators serve as bridges between cultures, facilitating communication and understanding between people who speak different languages. Ethical behaviour is critical in translation, as a translator’s actions and decisions directly affect the quality of communication, the accuracy of information, and the trust between parties. Without adherence to ethical principles, even small mistakes or misjudgments can lead to misunderstandings, financial loss, legal consequences, or damage to a translator’s reputation. For instance, in medical translation, an incorrect interpretation of instructions could endanger a patient’s life, while in legal translation, a minor inaccuracy could alter the outcome of a contract or court decision. Therefore, translators must observe a set of ethical principles that guide their professional behaviour. This article examines the most important ethical aspects of translation, including accuracy, confidentiality, neutrality, cultural awareness, and professionalism, and provides examples to illustrate their significance in practice.

Accuracy and Confidentiality

Accuracy, or fidelity to the original text, is the primary ethical obligation of a translator. Every word, phrase, and nuance should be conveyed as closely as possible to the original meaning. Translators must avoid introducing their own opinions, omitting important details, or distorting the message. Accuracy is particularly crucial in fields such as law, medicine, business, and international diplomacy. For example, a medical translator who misinterprets dosage instructions could cause serious harm to a patient, while a legal translator who mistranslates a contract term could cause disputes or financial losses.

Confidentiality is another critical ethical requirement. Translators frequently work with sensitive information, including personal data, corporate documents, or governmental materials. Maintaining confidentiality is both a legal and professional duty. A translator must not disclose information to unauthorized parties under any circumstances. For instance, when working on confidential business contracts, the translator must ensure that financial or strategic data is not revealed to competitors. Breaches of confidentiality undermine client trust, may result in legal action, and harm the translator's professional reputation. By upholding accuracy and confidentiality, translators demonstrate responsibility, reliability, and ethical integrity.

Neutrality and Professional Distance

Neutrality is a cornerstone of ethical translation. Translators must remain impartial, refraining from letting personal opinions, emotions, or biases influence their work. Neutrality is essential in various contexts, such as international negotiations, diplomatic meetings, or legal proceedings. For example, a translator who emphasizes one side's statements over another during a negotiation could unintentionally influence the outcome, creating conflicts or misunderstandings.

Professional distance complements neutrality. Translators must control their emotional responses and avoid personal involvement in the content they translate. Non-verbal behaviour, gestures, and facial expressions must remain neutral, particularly in situations where the translator is physically present. For example, a simultaneous

interpreter at a United Nations meeting must maintain composure and neutrality, even when interpreting politically sensitive statements. Professional distance ensures that the translator's presence does not affect the communication and that the work is perceived as fair and trustworthy.

Respect for Culture and Clients

Cultural awareness is an essential component of ethical translation. Translators must understand the cultural context of both the source and target languages to avoid misunderstandings or offence.

Translators act as cultural mediators, helping messages be understood appropriately across different societies. For example, idiomatic expressions, gestures, or culturally specific references may need adaptation to ensure clarity and respect. A marketing translator working on international campaigns must consider cultural sensitivities to avoid misinterpretation or negative reactions from the target audience.

Respect for clients is equally important. Ethical translators communicate politely, listen carefully to client requirements, adhere to deadlines, and deliver high-quality work. Reliability, punctuality, and professionalism reflect respect for the client's time and expectations. Ignoring these principles can damage professional relationships, reduce trust, and negatively affect the translator's reputation. By respecting both cultural nuances and client needs, translators uphold the integrity of their profession and ensure the quality of communication.

Professionalism and Continuous Learning

Professionalism encompasses responsibility, accountability, and commitment to high standards. Ethical translators consistently produce accurate, well-researched, and reliable work. Professionalism also involves recognizing one's limits. If a translator lacks sufficient knowledge of a subject or the target language, it is ethical to refuse the assignment or seek consultation with experts. Accepting a task beyond one's competence without preparation can compromise both quality and ethical standards.

Continuous learning is a further ethical obligation. Languages evolve, new terminology emerges, and technological tools like CAT software, translation memory, and machine translation post-editing require ongoing skill development. Translators who invest in continuous learning ensure their work remains accurate, efficient, and culturally appropriate. For example, understanding specialized medical or technical terminology is necessary to provide precise translations. By combining professionalism with ongoing education, translators strengthen the ethical foundation of their practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ethics are fundamental to the translation profession. Translators serve as intermediaries between languages and cultures, and their behaviour directly affects communication, trust, and the reputation of their profession. Observing ethical principles such as accuracy, confidentiality, neutrality, cultural awareness, and professionalism ensures that translators produce high-quality and reliable work. Ethical conduct fosters trust among clients, facilitates effective communication, and protects the translator's credibility. Aspiring translators must understand that ethics are not optional but central to every professional decision. By adhering to ethical standards, translators contribute to global understanding, support professional integrity, and maintain the respect of clients and society.

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