

THE FUNCTIONS, COMPETENCIES, AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS IN CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION PRACTICE

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Abstract. Professional translators occupy a critical position in the contemporary landscape of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. Their work extends beyond the literal conversion of text, encompassing linguistic expertise, cultural mediation, and ethical responsibility. This article examines the functions and competencies of professional translators, highlighting their role in ensuring accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and stylistic fidelity across diverse domains, including literary, technical, legal, and diplomatic translation. The study also addresses the integration of technological tools, such as computer-assisted translation and machine translation post-editing, and emphasizes the evolving responsibilities of translators in a globalized, digitally mediated environment. The findings underscore that professional translators are indispensable agents in the transmission of knowledge, ideas, and cultural values, demonstrating the complexity and significance of their contributions to modern communication.

Key words: Professional translation, Translator competencies, Cultural mediation, Ethical responsibility, Specialized translation, Translation technology, Post-editing, Cross-cultural communication

Introduction. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, professional translators play an essential role in facilitating communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is no longer regarded merely as the mechanical conversion of words from a source language into a target language; rather, it is recognized as a

complex cognitive, cultural, and ethical practice. Professional translators are tasked with ensuring not only linguistic accuracy but also contextual appropriateness, stylistic fidelity, and cultural sensitivity, particularly in domains such as literary, technical, legal, and diplomatic translation.

The rise of globalization and the proliferation of multilingual content have amplified the demand for professional translation services. At the same time, advancements in digital technologies, including machine translation (MT) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, have transformed the profession, redefining the translator's responsibilities. Translators are increasingly required to act as editors, post-editors, and quality evaluators of machine-generated outputs, integrating technological tools into their workflow while maintaining professional standards. Professional translation encompasses significant ethical responsibilities. Translators are entrusted with confidentiality, impartiality, and accuracy, particularly when handling sensitive or high-stakes content. The combination of linguistic expertise, cultural mediation, and ethical accountability underscores the indispensable role of professional translators in global communication.

Literature review. The role of professional translators has long been a central subject of inquiry in translation studies, reflecting the complex interplay between linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility. Early theoretical frameworks emphasized the linguistic and semantic dimensions of translation. Nida (1964) introduced the concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence, emphasizing that translation is not merely a word-for-word substitution but a process aimed at preserving meaning and function across languages. Catford (1965) similarly focused on the systematic correspondence between source and target languages, laying the foundation for understanding the cognitive and linguistic competencies required of translators.

Newmark (1988) expanded on this perspective by highlighting the practical responsibilities of translators in balancing fidelity to the source text with clarity, readability, and appropriateness in the target language. He argued that professional

translation demands both linguistic competence and the ability to interpret context, cultural references, and stylistic nuances. House (2015) further stressed that translation quality is dependent on the translator's ability to mediate meaning effectively while maintaining functional equivalence, particularly in specialized domains such as legal, medical, and technical translation.

Contemporary research increasingly acknowledges that professional translators function as cultural mediators as much as linguistic experts. Translators must navigate not only language but also cultural norms, social conventions, and rhetorical expectations, ensuring that the target audience can interpret the text as intended (Munday, 2016; Venuti, 1995). The ability to manage these cultural and pragmatic factors distinguishes professional translators from machine-based or untrained translation efforts, particularly in contexts requiring sensitivity to cultural nuance and stylistic fidelity.

The advent of translation technology has introduced additional dimensions to the professional translator's role. Machine translation (MT) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools have improved efficiency, consistency, and productivity in translation workflows. However, research indicates that human expertise remains essential for interpreting ambiguous content, resolving idiomatic expressions, and ensuring culturally and contextually appropriate translations (Garcia, 2015; O'Brien, 2012). Post-editing of machine-generated translations has emerged as a critical competency, requiring translators to assess and refine outputs while maintaining quality and fidelity.

Ethics is another cornerstone of professional translation. Translators are entrusted with responsibilities such as maintaining confidentiality, ensuring impartiality, and providing accurate and reliable translations, particularly in high-stakes or sensitive contexts (Pym, 2010). Failure to uphold these ethical standards can result in legal repercussions, miscommunication, or damage to professional credibility. As such, ethical awareness is inseparable from linguistic and cultural competence, forming a triad of essential skills for professional translators.

Additionally, domain-specific expertise has become increasingly important. Translators working in legal, medical, technical, or scientific contexts must possess specialized knowledge to ensure accurate and precise translation of terminology and concepts (Gile, 2009). Continuous professional development, including training in both subject-matter expertise and emerging translation technologies, is therefore critical for maintaining professional standards and meeting the evolving demands of the globalized communication landscape.

Conclusion. The role of professional translators in contemporary translation practice extends far beyond the literal conversion of text from a source language into a target language. As the literature demonstrates, professional translators are multifaceted agents who integrate linguistic expertise, cultural mediation, domain-specific knowledge, and ethical responsibility in their work. Their competencies enable the accurate, contextually appropriate, and culturally sensitive transmission of information across linguistic and cultural boundaries, ensuring that translated content meets both functional and stylistic standards.

Technological advancements, including machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools, have redefined the professional translator's responsibilities. Translators are increasingly required to act as post-editors, quality evaluators, and supervisors of machine-generated outputs, combining human judgment with technological efficiency. Nevertheless, human expertise remains indispensable for interpreting ambiguity, idiomatic expressions, and culturally embedded nuances that automated systems cannot fully capture.

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