

Research on Professional Translation Ethics Teaching

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Abstract: Since China has put forward the strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Global", the translation industry has developed fast. National colleges have also accelerated the training of professional translators, but the teaching of translation professional ethics is rare, which is essential and has greatly affected professional quality of translators. The author intends to introduce teaching modes of professional translation ethics in terms of the teaching content and methods by referring to Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct. The paper points out that it is necessary to conduct professional ethics teaching systematically, and that training professional translators should attach equal importance to professional ethics and professional abilities.

Keywords: translators; professional ethics; teaching; Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

Professional translation originated from the West. Although it started fairly late in China, it has developed rapidly in recent years. Compared with its fast development, we have lagged behind in terms of setting and teaching professional translation ethics here^[1]. Before Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct has been launched, the translation industry can refer to the codes of ethics, moral norms and practice guidelines which are mainly from the west^[2]. Chinese professional translators have either faced with ethical difficulties or been difficult to make decisions due to the lack of norms or rules for reference. The current situation of professional translation ethics teaching is not optimistic. Degree committee of the State Council has demanded that translation teaching should meet professional needs, mainly including language knowledge, encyclopedia knowledge (especially international politics, economy, law, etc.) and translation skills training (translation professional knowledge). However, there are hundreds of universities offering Bachelor of Translation and Interpreting (BTI) and Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI), among which only a few have professional translation ethics courses, such as Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

Based on Professional Translation Ethics and Codes of Conducts, this paper aims to introduce teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching methods and other aspects in professional translation ethics teaching, in order to provide some reference for translation teaching.

2. Professional Translation Ethics and the Feasibility of Its Teaching

Ethics is a set of basic principles, which is to regulate roles and reasonable behaviors of people in specific social relations. Modern society is complex and diverse, and people have gradually regarded obeying some rules conducive to maintaining and promoting social stability and harmony as requirements of moral life. And then professional ethics mainly made by professional groups has emerged. Professional ethics is the viewpoints and principles of practitioners to deal with professional ethics relationship. At present, it has three main characteristics: industry norms (i.e. regulating professional behaviors of specific professionals), value neutrality (i.e. paying more attention to how to conduct professional norms other than values issues behind the norms), technical rationality (namely, maximizing technical norms and minimizing personal characteristics, which can reflect good professional ethics). Professional ethics is closely related to education. Such majors involved high skills as medicine, law and accounting have long offered courses on professional ethics. Courses of professional legal ethics in American certified law schools is a case in point.

In some countries or regions with high professional translation, like Australia and Europe, the teaching of professional translation ethics has also been part of the translation teaching system. Professional translation ethics is the concepts and principles used by translators when handling

professional ethics relations, which reflects specific values and social relations. It consists of a series of clear understandable demands and principles (e.g.: honesty, neutrality, loyalty, confidentiality and cooperation), which translators should follow in various scenarios. It is also comprised of rules, codes and norms applicable to complicated working situations. Specific principles, codes and norms of professional behaviors are helpful to prevent possible occurrence of individual moral instability, and provide technical references for translators when faced with ethical dilemmas owing to professional behaviors conflicting with ethics.

Professional ethics shows that professional groups adhere to social ethics and leading values. With cultural, social and other changes brought about by technological advances, translators are confronted with increasing ethical challenges in working situations. Modern professions are concerned about issues of whether practitioners can be responsible for their professional behaviors, and whether they can reflect on possible effects on others caused by their behaviors. In terms of demands for translators' being accountable, translation educators have realized that ethics teaching should be fully integrated into translators training system^[3]. As institutions training professional translators, translation colleges undertake the dual tasks of improving professional abilities and quality of students. Professional abilities are what translation skills students should be trained as professional translators; while professional quality is to help students set up correct professional values, form the consciousness of professional behavioral norms, cultivate them to make ethical decision reasonably under different professional circumstances. By teaching students professional ethics at universities, they can not only fully enjoy the high-quality resources brought by professional translation talents training system and teachers, but also lay a good foundation for their continuing education after becoming professional translators.

3. Teaching Content and Process of Professional Translation Ethics

Currently, only a few colleges or universities have had courses professional translation ethics in China, and there is no mature and unified system for these kinds of courses. Professional translation ethics teaching is highly related to personal teaching, research and professional abilities of teachers. Translators conduct their tasks in ever-changing and varying environment, determining that they have to make professional ethics online and continuously adjust to the situations. Professional translation ethics teaching is rooted in the needs of translation practice and career development^[5]. Teachers help students to understand concepts, construct knowledge and improve their abilities through teaching process, and ultimately have them put it into practice. In the part, the author intends to explore the teaching content and process of professional translation ethics based on this viewpoint.

3.1. Teaching Content

Based on the development of the industry and basic professional ethics requirements for practitioners, the teaching of professional translation ethics courses has two objectives. The first aim is to concepts comprehension, which is to help students know more about the translation profession, relevant professional ethics, ethical norms and practice guidelines. The second one is to make decision reasonably, namely, to help students to develop abilities of ethical decision-making on the basis of full understanding. In other words, through reflection on specific ethical dilemmas and choices, students can learn to make reasonable and well-grounded judgments and decisions in different ethical situations. In terms of specific content, courses on professional translation ethics mainly includes the following three parts:

The first part is concepts of professional translation ethics. It means values and principles that translators should follow in their professional practice, and it is the concept of professional ethics shared by all translators. Translation schools are different from law schools or medical schools, because translation schools cultivate professional translators who are engaged in the same profession in different situations, while law schools or medical schools' goals are to cultivate legal or medical professionals who will be served as various positions such as judges, lawyers, clinicians, nurses, etc.. In the future, with the upgrading of translation technology, the application of AI, big data and other high technologies, talents trained by translation colleges may also play differing roles in translating process, therefore it is necessary to help all translation professionals to have unified professional ethics. To understand and recognize common professional ethics can help them to form professional groups with shared values. The nine guidelines listed in Part 4 of Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct are good examples of professional ethics shared by all translators^[2].

The second part is professional translation ethics relationships. It is the relations that translators get into with others in translation activities for the working places of professional translators are highly social. Excellent translators not only have a good command of languages, rich encyclopedia knowledge and excellent translation skills, but also excel at quickly identifying various situations and dealing with various relations. To meet demands of the translation market and rapidly become qualified professional translators, students must attach great importance to professional translation ethics relationships, and hone the abilities of how to properly handle such relationships. Section 5.2 in Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct defines what professional translation ethics relationships are, and clarifies each relationship between translators and customers, between translators and clients, translators and counterparts, and translators and the industry^[2].

The third section is norms of professional translation ethics, which is what the translators must abide by in their professional activities. In Section 5.3 to 5.5 Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct, it is stipulated that pre-translating, in-translating and post-translating behaviors should be in accordance with the process, and proposed procedural guidelines for translators while conducting task^[1]. Professional translation ethics teaching can also refer to documents in the translation industry from countries and regions where the translation markets have developed more maturely. After developing for several decades, these local translation markets have formed a set of documents with mature codes and norms to protect rights and interests of translators, coordinate interpersonal relations in the workplaces, and perfect ethical decisions made by translators. These documents are mainly as follows: ATA Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practice) and ATA Policy on Ethics Procedures by American Translation Association, as well as AUSIT Code of Ethics by Australian Translation Association, etc. Domestic documents and standards are also available for the teaching, like Part I of Professional Translation Ethics and Code of Conduct (GB/T19363.1-2008), Translation Service Quotation Code (ZYF002-2014), Basic Ability Requirements for Interpreters and Translators, Code of Ethics of Chinese Language Service Industry and so on. Considering that professional translation is specialized and with high standards, teaching professional translation ethics can also refer to professional ethics and ethics involved in other highly skilled jobs, such as International Professional Accountant Code of Ethics issued by International Federation of Accountants, Lawyers Basic Standards of Professional Ethics of National Lawyers Association, etc. The basic principles advocated by different codes of ethics and norms in varying industries and regions should be emphasized in teaching. In addition, the background and status quo of Chinese translation professionalization should be fully taken into account, and professional translation characteristics such as quality standards, translators training and certification should be included in the teaching content.

3.2. Teaching Process

Baker & Maier proposed that translation ethics teaching should solve three major problems and believed that classroom teaching activities should be designed on conceptual tools, potential strategies, and pedagogical tools. First, teachers should provide students with conceptual tools to comment on strengths and weaknesses of decision-making^[3]. Furthermore, available strategies should be provided for students to identify a series of strategies to tackle ethical dilemmas or compromising situations^[4]. Last, pedagogical tools are offered to create appropriate situations involving ethical decisions in which students can experience the process of decision-making and learn from experiences.

In designing professional translation ethics teaching, concepts of professional translation ethics and teaching content with clear relationships and rules should be employed, and three problems in translation ethics teaching can be considered as references.

To achieve expected effects, professional translation ethics can be taught in a variety of methods, such as Skopos teaching, case study, role-playing, etc. For Skopos teaching method, for example, teachers will integrate mainstream ethics into in-class exercises, guide students to think introspectively, and help them follow what kinds of standards to make reasonable decisions according to the priority, especially in cases where a couple of rule contradict each other, improving their ethical decision-making abilities. Besides, case study can be used to analyze various real cases upon ethical decision and discuss in the classroom^[5]. Apart from it, teachers can invite active professional translators into the classroom to share their own experiences, sharing how to cope with ethical dilemmas and make decisions in the translating process. In that case, what professional translators have conducted during on-the-spot translation enables students to have a clear idea of different considerations and decision-making in ethical dilemmas from different angles. When it comes to role-playing, teachers divide students into several groups, play different roles in actual situations, and then exchange their roles to take turns to experience different parts involved in real translating scenes

in terms of communication expectation, intention and starting points. In this way, students can simulate the real translating scenario with ethical dilemmas to greatest extent, reproduce how confused translators to make ethical decisions, and then make comments with teachers together. Case study, professional translators' sharing and role-playing place emphasis on interaction and call for higher requirements for both teachers and students, hence careful designing and effective guidance are needed to achieve the best effects.

Teachers' feedback and evaluation are also essential. Formative evaluation should be provided in time in the class, and summative assessment can be conducted at the end of a semester, which can be written in the form of a report or paper upon professional translation ethics decision-making.

4. Conclusion

Technological advance has changed types of translation, diversified roles of translators, and made the translation industry rapidly shift to the language service industry, which has exerted a great impact on translation activities and the whole industry. Professional translation ethics is rooted in the development of the translation industry and the society. A healthy and orderly-developing industry depends on laws and regulations, moral norms, public orders and good customs, as well as on the translators' correct cognition and practice of ethics. Under new circumstances, colleges and teachers responsible to train professional translation talents should pay more attention to the development of professional translation ethics, and cultivate students professional abilities and ethics. Meanwhile, they should also constantly perfect the teaching content and improve teaching methods to make students become translators endowed with proficient professional skills and strong sense of professional responsibilities, adopting their own professional capabilities and quality to make translation career credible and the translation industry develop healthily and orderly.

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