

Webinar on Ethics in Translation

On September 11 this year I presented a Webinar on Ethics in Translation, organised by the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT - the national professional body) but also in collaboration with ICTRG. Some 159 participants registered for the Webinar, with about half participating on the evening and all having access to the recorded version. I introduced the Webinar by commenting that Ethics has been an issue in translation from its earliest days, with centuries-old debates largely over questions of loyalty and representation in a field dominated by literary translation and translations of holy texts. To some extent, the history of translation theory can be seen as being the history of translation ethics.

Ethics in community translation bring us interestingly to confront arguably a much larger body of issues, yet the scarce literature produced so far gives us scant pathways for a robust consideration of ethics in our field, and would seem to be a significant priority for future development, consultation and research. Meanwhile, we have a number of Codes of Ethics that reference translation, though up until now these codes have been elaborated in much greater detail for Community Interpreting, not Translation. In the Webinar I used one piece of literature that I think gives insight into the way translators can approach their task - Andrew Chesterman's significant article "Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath" (*The Translator* v7 no2, 2001) and looked at two Codes of Ethics - that of ATA and AUSIT. The ATA code follows Chesterman's concern to provide a brief set of virtue principles (along the lines of the Hippocratic oath which I also used in the Webinar), while the AUSIT code lays out a set of principles with commentary, and then in some detail has a section on Conduct Issues Specific to Translators.

I wanted to give the audience some taste of the issue of loyalty that has dominated past translation theory and ethics, using a small case study of a real incident in literary translation, in relation to the translation from Danish to English of a famous Hans Christen Andersen fairytale *The Mermaid*, where a mermaid magically becomes a girl; the sentence in ques-

tion was "Then the little mermaid raised her lovely white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and glided over the floor..." (Hans Christen Andersen), and the ethical question which confronted the translator in this instance:

"What do you do when the publisher for whom you are translating wants you to omit the word "white"?"

As a parallel to this situation, issues of revision in community translation are also evident; how do we react when our translated texts are changed by an agency or authority without the translator's agreement?

There was also a question about problems in the *source text*, for example in two slightly different scenarios that were presented:

Poor source text. You are translating a welfare text for an agency but some text in the source document seems confusing or has a number of factual mistakes or gives unclear directions to the reader. You ask the agency to clarify this with the original client and then the following happens:

- Scenario A: The agency is reluctant to contact the client, says the client is harassing them to get the translation done by the looming deadline and clarification will take time and put the client off-side.. The agency asks you: Could you "just translate it". What do you do?
- Scenario B: The agency contacts the client and the client is very apologetic but they have got the bits of texts from various sources and don't even know if they can track down the authors of every bit - could you "use your judgment and finish it off as best you can?" What do you do?

The AUSIT code of ethics does address such situations, delineating where the responsibility of a translator stops. Participants gave examples of similar situations, leading to a discussion of the often ambiguous relation between translators and translation agencies and companies, a topic that deserves greater attention. Agencies for the most part are not covered by a code of ethics. Signifi-

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cantly, however, some agencies in the Australian context, for example, insist their interpreters and translators abide by the AUSIT Code of Ethics, and the Code actually comments that agencies that do so must also abide by the requirement to provide the translators with clarity on the source text, and essential references and briefing.

Among the other issues discussed, there was considerable participant discussion on the issue of professional solidarity, particularly the stipulation in both the AUSIT code and Chesterman's oath, that translators should not unfairly undercut their competitors - fellow translators. Many commented that they found this a slippery or unclear injunction.

Finally, however, it is worthwhile returning to the Mermaid example above - participants gave various, though usually cautious, examples on how they would respond - withdraw from the job? use a euphemism in place of "white"? do as the publisher requests? In this real case, translator William Glyn Jones insisted on maintaining the word "white" in his translation and when the publisher nonetheless removed it, requested that his name be withdrawn from the translation (detailed in Ieva Zauberga "Rethinking power relations in translation" *Across Languages and Cultures* v1 no1. 2000).

With community translators virtually never having their own name on their translations, the question remains on how can we learn from such examples to strengthen our own sense of ethics?

Uldis Ozolins
Western Sydney University

Special issue on translation of questionnaires

Translation & Interpreting has recently published a special issue on translation of questionnaires in cross-national and cross-cultural research, much of which is relevant to Community Translation. The special issue was guest-edited by Dorothée Behr (GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Mannheim, Germany) and Mandy Sha (Independent Consultant, USA) and includes the following articles:

Introduction: Translation of questionnaires in cross-national and cross-cultural research
Dorothée Behr, Mandy Sha

Translating questionnaires for cross-national surveys: A description of a genre and its particularities based on the ISO 17100 categorization of translator competences
Dorothée Behr

Translation of country-specific programs and survey error: Measuring the education level of immigrants
Patricia Goerman, Leticia Fernandez, Rosanna Quiroz

Questionnaire translation in the European Company Survey: Conditions conducive to the effective implementation of a TRAPD-based approach
Maurizio Curtarelli, Gijs van Houten

The translator's perspective on translation quality control processes for international large-scale assessment studies
Britta Upsing, Marc Rittberger

Probing for sensitivity in translated survey questions: Differences in respondent feedback across cognitive probe types
Zeina Nazih Mneimneh, Kristen Cibelli Hibben, Lisa Bilal, Sanaa Hyder, Mona Shahab, Abdulrahman Binmuammar, Yasmin Altwaijri

Back translation as a documentation tool
Jiyoung Son

Using video technology to engage deaf sign language users in survey research: An example from the Insign project
Jemina Napier, Katherine Lloyd, Robert Skinner, Graham H Turner, Mark Wheatley

English to Spanish translated medical forms: A descriptive genre-based corpus study
Patricia Gonzalez Darriba

Translation and visual cues: Towards creating a road map for limited English speakers to access translated Internet surveys in the United States
Mandy Sha, Y. Patrick Hsieh, Patricia L. German

(For more information, please see <http://www.trans-int.org/index.php/transint>)

How natural does it sound, the translation?

One day, while chatting with another translator, he said something that caught my attention and got me thinking. He believed that because English and Chinese are significantly different, in English-Chinese translation, it is inevitable and necessary to keep the taste of foreignness in the Chinese text so as to deliver the original spirit. In other words, it is acceptable for him that expressions in an English-Chinese translation do not sound natural in Chinese.

Though still unsure what he meant by 'spirit', his belief intrigued my interests not only because translational Chinese has been an interdisciplinary field of study drawing from a variety of Chinese study fields (e.g. linguistics, translation, sociology), but also because this belief seems to be inconsistent with the nature of what we call community translation (e.g. healthcare leaflets, legal and administrative information), which aims to empower members of linguistic and cultural minorities to have access to information closely related to public and personal welfare. Being a practising Chinese language translator

based in New Zealand, I am usually assigned jobs related to community translation much more often than non-community translation ones. Seeing the translation types of my assignments, I would boldly assume that translators, at least those who are based in New Zealand, work more often on translation assignments which contain information relating to public/personal welfare or rights.

If my assumption stands, I then would ask myself two questions:

- How would the target reader react to a translation that does not sound natural, not the way they would speak and write in their first language?
- To what extent would the target reader be empowered to have access to information relating to their own interests and rights?

As a teacher of Mandarin Chinese, I often remind my students of awkwardness in sentences they produce. Awkwardness does not necessarily mean that

a sentence is grammatically wrong. It is just that the sentence may sound a bit funny or weird to a native speaker in certain contexts. When thinking of that, I then come up with a third question:

- While language learners are often required to make utterances that sound natural to native speakers, shouldn't that apply to translators as well?

The third question may seem to risk a conflict between producing source-text oriented and target-text oriented translation, or between literal and free translation. However, that is not the interest of my writing here. The interest, and again another question, is a simple, yet also a rather complicated one: whether we should produce a translation that effectively bridges linguistic and socio-cultural gaps between community members, and how?

Wei Teng

University of Canterbury

Our new member

Assistant Prof. Katarzyna Stachowiak (University of Warsaw, Poland)



Warsaw, Poland.

She embarked on studies on simulated real-life translation tasks in students, and on translation and paraphrasing. She has also studied multitasking, attention management,

Katarzyna Stachowiak works as an assistant professor in the Department of Interpreting Studies and Audio-visual Translation, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of

cognitive effort, language comprehension and production, number processing and multimodal processing in interpreters and non-interpreting bilinguals. She was the head researcher in a project on phonological processing in interpreters financed by the Polish National Science Centre (2015/19/N/HS2/03400).

Katarzyna's academic experience involves a research visit at the Centre for Research and Innovation in Translation and Translation Technology (CRITT) Translation Copenhagen Business School, Denmark,

and at the Institutt for litteratur, områdestudier og europeiske spark, University of Oslo, Norway.

Finally, Katarzyna Stachowiak is a medical and technical interpreter and translator herself, combining her practical and academic experience. For more of Katarzyna's and our other members' information, please [click here](#) to visit our website.

Conferences to catch up

- ◇ 3rd Annual Symposium on Language Access
University of Texas Arlington, Texas, US
9th November 2018
For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ 1st Annual APTIS Conference — Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Translation & Interpreting
Aston University, Birmingham, UK
23rd-24th November 2018
For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation
The Chinese University of Hong Kong, China
10th-12th December 2018
For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ Third International Congress on Translation and Interpretation — When Cultures Meet Languages: Innovation, Challenges, and Technological Competitiveness
- ◇ The Panamanian Association of Translators and Interpreters (APTI), Republic of Panama
29th-30th March 2019
For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ CIUTI Conference 2019—Bridging the Divide between Theory and Practice: Innovative Research and Training Strategies in Translation and Interpreting Studies
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
3rd-5th June 2019
For details, please [click here](#)
- ◇ ICIT 2019 : 21st International Conference on Interpreting and Translation
Copenhagen, Denmark
11th-12th June 2019
For details, please [click here](#)

ICTRG MISSION STATEMENT

- ◇ *To create an international research community capable of leading and conducting quality research into Community Translation;*
- ◇ *To facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas and international research partnerships;*
- ◇ *To raise awareness of Community Translation needs in different countries;*
- ◇ *To promote professionalized Community Translation services;*
- ◇ *To produce and disseminate quality research outputs that inform training, policymaking and professional practice.*

ICTRG WEBSITE!

<http://communitytranslation.net/>

We make community translation accessible and understandable to communities!