Professional translators’ ethics in workplace communication

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Abstract. The article deals with the history of the concept of translation ethics in foreign and Russian literature. The understanding of this concept from different points of view is analysed. On the basis of the content of electronic discussion platforms (a group in the social network and professional forums) specific characteristics of translators’ workplace communication on ethical issues are highlighted.

1. Introduction
The ethics of interaction in different areas of professional life became a relevant subject of study in different research paradigms, because the importance of communicative competences and the ability to be a member of a team is growing exponentially: the post-industrial era increased the role of a person who organises and implements an interactive process. Globalization as a space for international contacts in different areas of society’s life revealed new aspects of mediated communication, translator ethics and ethics of translation began to receive a new understanding, primarily in the framework of translation studies, which has become a truly integral branch of the Humanities.

2. Research
One of the most relevant, very successful and concise definitions of the concept of “ethics of translation” belongs to the Austrian translation scholar Peter Sandrini. He published it in his article on translation studies in the “Lexicon of the Humanities”: “The ethics of translation has repeatedly become the subject of discussion, but in general it depends on theoretical principles of the translation concept; its clear model still remains an object of study. Translation supports and makes it possible to interact across language and cultural boundaries with communication partners who belong to a foreign culture. Any text and any translate is a product of a certain culture: the production of texts and their reception are determined by current standards and parameters. They depend on point in time and differ in different cultures. Translation creates texts, manipulates texts to make them available to new recipients” [1].

The social determinism of translator ethics is a culture of translation – a historically established, self-regulating system that is a part of culture in general, dialectically related to attitudes towards translation practice. From the point of view of the Austrian scholar in translation studies Erich Prunč, this is a set of socially established, regulated and adjustable standards, conventions, presuppositions, values and patterns of behaviour common to all those involved in translational processes [2, 3, 4, 5].

As a social construct, the culture of translation is a fact of regulating interests of participants and functions of individuals and institutions involved in translation. Actors are not only translators, but also all those involved in the process - authors initiating translation - translators - addressees-recipients of translation. The culture of translation may reflect, first of all, actual provisions of translation studies, and then the actions of translators will have an instructive character. A democratically well-designed ethics of translation involves responsible handling of interests and potential of partners in interaction. This way of forming translation ethics is reflected by the term of loyalty (“Loyalität” in German) introduced by Christiane Nord. This term implies fidelity to the original, responsibility and professionalism of the translator towards the author, customer and to addressees [6, 7, 8].
It is worth pointing out that some researchers consider the term “loyalty” insufficiently comprehensive, because it lacks moral correction of the translator as an ethically active integral person [9, 10]. Therefore, a universal focus of loyalty of translators in relation to other partners on interaction needs to be replaced by a multidimensional loyalty of communicating actors to each other.

Translators performing their responsibilities within the scope of instructive, equivalence-oriented translation studies should possess the competence to deal creatively with a conflict of interests and take responsibility for making a decision in favour of a certain partner on interaction. This responsibility implies solidarity with other translators, as well as respecting provisions of the professional code of ethics [11, 12]. Thus, the framework conditions for implementing ethics of translation are transformed in a subjective manner in the reflected ethical behaviour of the translator. Victor Shadrin makes an attempt to present the ethical concept of translator’s activity and identifies four basic models of translation ethics: representative ethics, service ethics, communicative ethics and normative ethics [13]. Rather schematic modelling of ethical parameters of professional behaviour of translators made by this researcher does not allow to present a set of actions performed in the overall scope of their characteristics. Therefore, the determinism of ethics by actual theoretical principles of translation studies remains the main issue.

Along with the Scopos theory, a significant role in the formation of current ethics of translation was also played by descriptive paradigm. It considered, in particular, the role of “patronage” - a person or institution controlling the actions of the translator [14]. Undoubtedly, these ideas led to the development of translation standards, which are based on a system of social values, public and individual expectations regarding communicative behaviour and the choice of translator’s decisions in a given situation. [15].

Andrew Chesterman sets the norms quite in the classical spirit of providing the exact similarity to the original and minimizing misunderstandings in translation [16, 17], and suggests using the oath of Jerome in the translation activity by analogy with the Hippocratic oath:

1. I swear to keep this Oath to the best of my ability and judgement. [Commitment]
2. I swear to be a loyal member of the translators’ profession, respecting its history. I am willing to share my expertise with colleagues and to pass it on to trainee translators. I will not work for unreasonable fees. I will always translate to the best of my ability. [Loyalty to the profession]
3. I will use my expertise to maximize communication and minimize mis-understanding across language barriers. [Understanding]
4. I swear that my translations will not represent their source texts in unfair ways. [Truth]
5. I will respect my readers by trying to make my translations as accessible as possible, according to the conditions of each translation task. [Clarity]
6. I undertake to respect the professional secrets of my clients and not to exploit clients’ information for personal gain. I promise to respect dead-lines and to follow clients’ instructions. [Trustworthiness]
7. I will be honest about my own qualifications and limitations; I will not accept work that is outside my competence. [Truthfulness]
8. I will inform clients of unresolved problems, and agree to arbitration in cases of dispute. [Justice]
9. I will do all I can to maintain and improve my competence, including all relevant linguistic, technical and other knowledge and skills. [Striving for excellence] [18].

It is worth noting that attempts to offer such consolidated standardizing texts were made by many scholars in translation. Taking into account the position of translators “in a special intercultural space, at the crossroads of cultures”, Anthony Pym formulates five principles for translator ethics:

1. Translators are responsible for their product as soon as they accept to produce it.
2. Translators are responsible for the probable effects of their translations.
3. Translator ethics need not involve deciding between two cultures.
4. Transaction costs should not exceed the total benefits ensuing from the corresponding cooperative interaction.

5. Translators, insofar as they are more than simple messengers, are responsible for the capacity of their work to contribute to long-term stable, cross-cultural cooperation [19].

In Russian translation studies, the conceptual solution regarding translator ethics has not been elaborated yet, but many theorists with vast professional experience gave different versions of rules, postulates and advice. It should be noted that all of them were published in modern Russia: Ryurik Minyar-Beloruchev wrote about the etiquette of the interpreter [20], Andrey Chuzhakin and Pavel Palazhchenko formulated 10 rules of ethics for interpreters [21], and Mikhail Zwilling, back in 1964, published “Tips for simultaneous interpreters and those who would like to become such”, in which 10 humorous precepts for simultaneous interpreters were given [22]. Forty years later these tips were published in Bridges, translators and interpreters' journal, and M. Zwilling noted some inaccuracies and errors committed by him while translating. These tips first appeared in German at bulletin board of MGIMO University.

It can be stated that these publications, as well as the work of Gennady Miram [23], reflected the tradition of ironic attitude of the 90s to the definition of rules and norms that were replaced by the postulates of translation ethics proposed by Irina Alekseeva in her textbook [24]. These rules are addressed to both interpreters and translators, they are included in the Chapter “Ethics of the Translator” and based on the author’s understanding of such categories as moral principles of the translator, standards of professional behaviour of the translator, professional suitability and professional requirements, knowledge of technical support of translation, legal and social status of the translator [25]. The postulates formulated by I. Alekseeva cover various aspects of the translation process and its actor, let us compare:

- The translator must take care of his health, as the quality of translation depends on his physical condition.
- In translation, the translator must follow the rules of its execution, the correct attitude to the customer. [26].

Such different “responsibilities” of the translator are undoubtedly related to multidimensional and complex character of the contexts of both interpretation and translation. The wording of the rules governing the behaviour of the translator, is determined by constant throughout the entire history of translation requirements of equivalence and adequacy. Therefore, in the discourse on ethics we note the following requirements: “to follow the rules of its design”, as well as “with the help of professional actions known to him always strive to convey as much as possible the invariant of the source text, focusing on functional dominants of the original”, “has no right to change the meaning and composition of the text during translation, reduce it or expand it, if the additional task to adapt, select, add, etc. is not set by the customer” [27].

The dependence of studying translator ethics on his work consisting in creating the translation text is noted by many researchers, and the factor of the personality of the translator receives a proper assessment [28, 29, 30, 31].

In modern translation studies, ethical problems of translation activity require new understanding, because the role of ethical codes, which are developed by both large translation associations and individual translation agencies, increases significantly against the background of large-scale professional communication of translators via electronic platforms. The problems of ethical regulation of translator’s behaviour in workplace interactions represent one of the main discussion topics.

Communicative interaction of translators on business issues is a communication about their professional activities, ways of its implementation, improvement and optimization. In this respect, the concept of workplace communication of translators is synonymous with the concept of professional discourse of translators. The electronic form of communication, in particular, within the framework of various discussion Internet sites, provides for a prompt resolution of topical issues faced by translators in the course of their professional activities.
Now, let us analyse the content of the forums of the largest translation resource ProZ.com in English and the “Code of Ethics” group in Russian on Facebook social network to identify the specifics of translation ethics and its application in practice. The subject of messages on the indicated resources is similar and raises the following questions:

- interaction with customers (forms, terms, conditions of remuneration; transfer of copyright, characteristics of employment contracts with translators, methods of conflict management, disclosure and dissemination of information, etc.);
- the behaviour of the translator in the course of translation job (cancellation of the order on the eve of the event; use of the signal button during simultaneous translation; withholding information in court translation, distribution of tips between a guide-translator and a driver, etc.);
- interaction with colleagues (transferring an order to another translator if it is impossible to carry it out by himself; claiming to execute an order of a colleague, etc.);
- discussion of the ethical code of the translator (creation of a national ethical code; discussion of already existing codes of industry organizations, translation agencies and communities).

The topics presented reflect the vectors of interaction between communicants of translation interaction (translator-customer, translator-translator), as well as the target audience of ethical standards in translation – members of translation community (in a broader sense – participants of the translation market). The diversity of the issues discussed correlates with the fact that today translation is an independent emerging branch of the economy with numerous important, pressing issues that need to be resolved for its successful development. In his work “Translation as a Profession”, Daniel Gouadec very aptly highlights the basic rules of professional ethics of the translator and the contexts that every bona fide translator should follow (Basic rules. Vis-à-vis the work provider, client. In the course of a translation/localisation job. With regard to payment. Vis-à-vis colleagues or fellow translators. Vis-à-vis partners) [32]. This classification is explicitly proved by practical examples of discussion in forums.

Discussing ethical aspects of translation on electronic platforms is also a way of training prospect professionals. Thus, the analysed data contain the following messages:

- novice translators asking their senior colleagues to share their experience: Greetings for everybody. I am wondering if you can help me with your experience I am a novice and I would like to know some examples in real life at doing this task of interpreting regarding to ethics where you have to make a decision. Case studies where you have to decide what to do. It does not matter what kind of task was requested by your client [https://www.proz.com/forum/translation_theory_and_practice/273961-ethical_dilemmas.html];

- students in translation: Dear colleagues! I would like to ask those of you who have worked / are working as an interpreter with heads of state, Prime Ministers, Ministers, etc., to fill out a short questionnaire on neutrality … The research is anonymous; I will have access to the received data exclusively. The results of the research will be presented in the thesis “Neutrality of the Interpreter in Interpreting the First Persons”, the electronic version of which will soon be available in the repository of graduation papers of Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic) [https://www.facebook.com/groups/TranslatorsCodex/]. – Translation from Russian into English is made by the authors.

Temporal characteristic allows to classify messages into two categories: urgent and non-urgent. The first are situations in which it is urgently necessary to get a piece of advice from colleagues to adequately perform a professional task. For example, calculating characters in order to get payment for the translation of the Power Point presentation; choosing a translator’s style of clothing when working with customers from the Middle East, etc. The second are the so-called “case-studies”, when the translator discusses the actions taken after the fact. For example, whether to agree in the future to translate a document of poor typographical quality, on which the text for translation is not accurately
displayed; whether translators can publish photos from events at which they worked in social networks, etc.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of theoretical works allowed to establish that ideas regarding the development of translation ethics evolved over several stages. Initially, the ethics of translation was interpreted as a reflection of the culture of society as a whole. Later, the culture / ethics of translation is considered as a social entity that takes into account the interests of partners on interaction (authors-initiators of translation, translators and recipients of translation). Being in the framework of equivalence-oriented translation, translators acquire a new competence to smooth out conflicts of interest, which directly implies following the provisions of the professional code based on the system of social values. Ethical principles of the translator as a participant of intercultural communication are also formulated. In Russian translation studies, the first ideas about translation ethics found their expression in the form of advice and recommendations to interpreters. Subsequently, postulates addressed to both translators and interpreters were formulated. Analysis of the content of professional group and forums allows us to identify several areas of discussion on ethical issues (relations «translator↔employer/customer/client», relations «translator↔translator», relations «translator↔novice translator/student», professional behaviour of the translator, code of ethics). This proves the fact that translation ethics today is not only a reflection of the culture of society, but also it represents an important tool for optimizing translation activities and developing the industry in general.

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