

Introduction: Voice, Ethics and Translation

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Abstract

Although previous research on ethics demonstrates growing awareness that many agents or subjectivities besides translators and interpreters are involved in translation and interpreting processes, the consequences of this multiplicity for thinking about ethics in translation still lacks focused attention. In this introduction, we show how this special issue, titled *Voice, Ethics and Translation*, reduces this gap by highlighting the concept of voice and the idea that the world of translating and interpreting consists of many voices 'having a say'. This carries with it the potential for negotiation, conflict and dissent regarding what constitutes good and bad translation and interpreting practice. The nine contributions discuss questions such as whose voices are involved in ethical negotiations, what is the nature of these negotiations, who has more power to have their voices heard, and whether translators and interpreters should be given more trust and responsibility. As evinced by these various contributions, a consensus seems to be emerging to the effect that rather than blindly following outside authorities in ethical matters, translators and interpreters need to be encouraged to independently reflect on a variety of voices on ethics and be actively conscientious and responsible in actual translation and interpreting situations.

Keywords: translation; interpreting; voice; ethics; clashing voices; power

1. Mapping voice, ethics and translation

This special issue is intended as a contribution to the ongoing scholarly debate about translation ethics by bringing the concept of *voice* into the discussion. Translation involves a number of engaged participants – translators, interpreters, translation or interpreting coordinators, commissioners, copy editors, publishers, authors of original texts, critics, translator and interpreter trainers, researchers, and so forth – who all have a voice, in the sense that they all ‘have a say’ in the processes of translation and interpreting (cf. Jansen, 2017). This ‘having a say’ makes every participant, not just translators and interpreters, ethically accountable. Furthermore, the multiplicity of voices that are often involved carries with it the potential for disagreement, competition and conflict regarding the rights and wrongs of translation and interpreting practices. This gives rise to a variety of situations and issues that have yet to receive the concentrated focus they deserve.

Since the early 2000s the field of translation studies has seen a ‘return to ethics’ (Pym, 2001/2014; see e.g. Koskinen, 2000; Venuti, 2002; Tymoczko, 2006; Baker & Maier, 2011/2014; Kenny, 2011; Dolmaya, 2013; Oittinen, 2014; Drugan & Tipton, 2017). This return is taking place, Pym suggests (2001/2014, p. 129), as a reaction against the objective, disinterested attitude towards ethics within the dominating paradigm of descriptive translation studies which began with Toury’s seminal work *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995). While the descriptive approach did transform Translation Studies into a properly scientific discipline with its new conceptual framework and methodology, it ended up neglecting an essential dimension of the experience of various participants in the translation process, that of the sometimes excruciating feeling that a given translation solution, or a given choice of how to – in a more general sense – behave during the translation process, might somehow be right or wrong, better or worse than other solutions, other choices. Descriptivism was simply not very helpful in triggering reflections or offering

solutions to how to deal with those ethical issues that invariably arise during the working day of a translator or interpreter (or editor, proofreader, etc.).

The return to ethics has certainly opened up the field for such reflection with a focus on a wide variety of issues, both old and new. Many previous contributions to this quite active branch of translation studies fall within the four categories proposed by Andrew Chesterman (2001/2014) – ethics of representation, ethics of communication, ethics of service, and norm-based ethics – meaning that they focus, respectively, on how to represent authors' intentions/texts in the best way, how to handle the otherness of the source culture/author/text in a respectful manner, how to best take into account the interests of commissioners and other recipients of translated texts, and how to bring culturally-specific values and norms to bear on ethical thinking and behaviour. Other contributions have taken as their point of departure genres that have hitherto not received that much explicit attention in connection with the notion of ethics, such as children's literature (Oittinen, 2014), while yet others have turned their attention to ethical issues arising from new technological developments (Kenny, 2011), to forms of translation that are in and of themselves ethically motivated, such as activist translation (Tymoczko, 2006), or to new forms of translation, such as crowdsourcing (Dolmaya, 2011). Last but not least, the spotlight has been turned on the consequences that this new ethical awareness ought to have for translator and interpreter training (Baker & Maier, 2011/2014).

Within this area, it is possible to trace a growing recognition of and concern with the plurality of agents involved in translation and interpreting, and their respective duties and/or rights before, during and after the translational act. Agents that typically recur in the literature are for example publishers and co-translators (who may engage in ethical or unethical behaviour vis-à-vis translators, see e.g. Laygues, 2001/2014), the recipients of translating or interpreting services (who deserve to be able to trust the translator or interpreter's loyalty, especially in critical or pressed

circumstances, see e.g. Bulut & Kurultay, 2001/2014), and more recently, the multitude of participants involved in the process of crowdsourcing translations (Dolmaya, 2013). What this special issue hopes to promote is a more direct focus both on the existence of this plurality of agents and on what this means for ethical thinking and ethical behaviour within the research and practices of translation and interpreting. Our point of departure is that every agent has a ‘voice’, a potential for subjective expression, which he or she may (or may not) choose to deploy in a given translation or interpreting situation. Previous research on voice in Translation Studies has shown that translation and interpreting can be seen as a matter of circulation of and confrontation between such voices (see e.g. Folkart, 1991; Mossop, 1998; Hermans, 2007; Jansen & Wegener, 2013; Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet, 2013; Alvstad et al., 2017). A voice will manifest itself as ‘a cluster of textual features that gives the impression of being attributable to a single source of enunciation’ (Folkart, 1996, p. 127, as translated by Taivalkoski-Shilov in this issue). Such clusters can be found both externally to the translated or interpreted texts themselves (e.g. in spoken or signed monologues or conversations, or in written paratexts), and internally to them, revealing the ‘tangle of subjectivities’ inherent in the production and reception of any translated (written or oral) text (Alvstad et al., 2017, pp. 3-4).

More importantly in the present context, sometimes voices *clash*, both externally and internally to translated texts, owing to conflicting interests, cultural differences and varying conceptions of what constitutes good and bad practice in translation and interpreting, as well as good and bad practice in the professional areas in which the translators and interpreters carry out their work. In line with a developing research agenda on voices of translation (Alvstad et al., 2017), this issue seeks to use the concept of voice as a pivot in exploring notions of subjectivity, power and conflicting sensitivities and positions regarding what ethical behaviour should mean and what it should be.

The various contributions to this special issue gravitate towards four overarching, voice-related questions and topics. First, *whose voices* are at play in shaping ideas about translational ethics? All the contributions either directly contemplate this issue (most notably Greenall), or constitute illustrative examples of various agents that have a say in various matters, such as translators, interpreters, authors, recipients of translations, legal institutions, publishers and academic institutions. Translators and interpreters and many other types of translational agents are by their very nature placed in a mediating role, torn between two or more languages, cultures, persons, institutions and professional areas – which inevitably sometimes leads to clashing voices (e.g. Chesterman, Skaaden). Commissioners, clients and other translation professionals, just to mention a few, have differing expectations to what translators, proofreaders, interpreters and so forth ought (or ought not) to do, and conflicts may arise as regards the goal, impact, quality and cost of the work carried out in a translation event. This means that as a rule, translational agents, when striving to act ethically, have to choose which of the different parties they will be (most) obliged towards.

Second, what is the *nature of the negotiations* between the various voices of translational ethics? Again, some contributions address this question more or less explicitly, while others demonstrate the nature of such negotiations in specific contexts. It is shown, for example, that the negotiations sometimes take place predominantly externally, that is in the form of written or spoken exchanges between authors and their translators which may be either peaceful or conflictive (Jansen). Sometimes negotiations between voices take place internally, that is in cases where different mental voices need to find a workable balance inside the minds of the translational agents in situ (Englund-Dimitrova). And sometimes such negotiations take place both externally and internally, for example in situations where external codes of ethics and other guidelines come into conflict with a given translational agent's internal conscience (Tiselius).

Third, and relatedly, an underlying question in many of the contributions is whose voices are *more powerful* (Chesterman, Greenall). Some of the contributions demonstrate that formal institutions still possess the power to dictate, shape or cause problems in the field of ethics (Vald on), but also that such institutions can sometimes be on translational agents' side, *solving* problems in the field of ethics (Park). The existence of different kinds of power is also touched on. Institutions are not the only forceful players on the scene: even more or less independently-acting agents have their own kind of power to wield; as expert mediators, they may assume what has been called 'discretionary power' (Tiselius).

Fourth and finally, many of the contributions touch on the issue of whether the 'core' translational agents, that is the translators and interpreters – the foot soldiers of translation, so to speak – ought to be given *more trust and responsibility*, or, in a word, power (Chesterman, Greenall). The world in general and the world of translation and interpreting in particular are both quickly evolving, and each new translational context will present its own new and unique challenges. As Cronin (2017, p. 3) points out, twenty-first-century translation scholars and practitioners will have to address and engage with issues such as climate justice, energy security, biodiversity loss as well as linguicide, eco-migration, resource conflicts and global monocultures. These areas, which are of great importance to the survival and well-being of humanity, and whose successful management absolutely depends on intelligently and thoughtfully devised intercultural communication, will undoubtedly add to the complexity of translation ethics. Thus, rather than being taught to unthinkingly follow professional rules and guidelines, translators and interpreters need to be encouraged to take leadership over the hum of voices surrounding them, to reflect deeply on ethics outside of translational situations, and to be quick of mind, flexible, adaptable and ethically creative within individual situations (cf. Baker & Maier, 2011/2014, p. 2). Having said that, any framework, such as the voices framework, that recognizes the influence on a given

translated or interpreted text of other voices and circumstances beyond the translator/interpreter's control also needs to warn about the inherent danger in such a position since it entails that if something goes wrong, the translator and/or interpreter will again be the sole locus of blame, and the myth of the lone translator (Alvstad et al., 2017, pp. 3-4) might become even harder to dispel (Chesterman, Skaaden).

With a common focus on different voices and/or their interactions in situations that require ethical consideration, the different contributions to this issue cover a wide range of areas, topics and cases and together function as a prism that reveals both the complexity as well as the patterns that exist between and among the ethical concerns investigated. The contributions deal with literary translation, machine translation, public service interpreting and the interpreting of talk show interviews; they deal with copyright issues, research ethics, publishing ethics and reactions to translation errors. This demonstrates above all the extreme multitude of agencies and subjectivities that are involved in various ways in the activities of translation, interpreting, translation studies research and translation publishing, but also the great variety in how these voices make themselves heard or seen, the array of perspectives they occupy and express, how they negotiate and the various outcomes of these negotiations.

2. The contributions

The first contribution, 'The Discursive (Re-)construction of Translational Ethics' (Greenall), creates a springboard to the remaining articles by laying out some of the most important voices in a systematic manner, categorizing them, looking at their discursive habitats (where they are typically heard or seen) and creating an overview of their content – that is the ideas about ethics they typically propagate. The emphasis in the article is on the intersection of various views across the discursive field as a whole, although special attention is given to voices that are not so often thought

of as contributing to the discourse on ethics, namely the voices of various categories of recipients of translations (i.e. journalists, bloggers and other commenters). The article ends by suggesting that rather than unthinkingly adopting ethical rules and guidelines from a narrow range of institutional authorities (when legally unbound to them), translational agents ought to take this whole broad range of voices as input to processes of independent ethical reflection and critical thinking to guide them in their work.

We often think of ethics as something that should be in place before the act of translation or interpreting has taken place, in order, for example, to pre-empt errors of various kinds in the translated text. The second contribution to this special issue – ‘Post errorem’ (Chesterman) – draws our attention to the fact that despite the (possible) existence of ethical guidelines, despite (possible) there-and-then ethical awareness on the part of the translational agent(s), errors *do* sometimes occur, and that what happens at this point, *after* the fact, are also actions that can be unethical or more or less ethically sound. Introducing a variety of different scenarios and cases involving such post-error reactions or non-reactions, Chesterman discusses various clashes between a number of different external and/or internal voices on ethics, including his own voice as an academic and that of the ‘inner voice(s)’ of those translators who, for some reason, refuse to correct clear translational errors when that error is being pointed out to them. The article unveils a plethora of unanswered questions related to the ethics of error-handling by publishers, translators, translational institutions, editors and academics, which demonstrates how intricate the field of translational ethics can be to navigate. Chesterman’s proposed way to gather up these ‘loose ends’ is mainly of an external nature, in the guise of updating national and international ethical guidelines. But he also emphasizes the importance of the translator’s ‘inner voices’, suggesting that we should focus not only on the translation’s *skopos* but also on the translator’s *telos*, that is his or her personal motivation, for example an ideological one.

Such ideological telos and both the written and unwritten codes within the profession may be behind the historically dominating ethics of fidelity in the field of literary translation. In her contribution entitled 'I'm a Translator and I'm Proud: How Literary Translators View Authors and Authorship', Jansen investigates literary translators' ethical stance in regard to the text at hand, showing how recent academic calls for the 'emancipation' of translators – for their right to be identified as the 'authors' of their translations, viewed as autonomous textual products – are not necessarily always echoed by views from within community of practitioners, at least not in any straightforward way. Jansen called on the voices of the practitioners themselves by conducting a unique survey in 2015 among Scandinavian literary translators, where as many as 190 responded. While the majority of the respondents rejected the idea that the translation is 'their text', the free text comments revealed a more complex picture: most of the translators perceived that they have the freedom to follow their personal ethics, although this ethics went strongly in the direction of desiring to provide a faithful text, showing that in practice it may not be that easy to distinguish between telos (inner voices) and the external pressure of norms. For Jansen's informants, however, the production of a faithful text was not perceived as an act of subservience; in fact, many took great pride in their ability to provide a successful re-creation and stated their wish for this particular form of art to be more highly recognized. The article ends by concluding that the translators, while claiming 'ownership', did not in fact wish to claim 'authorship.'

Some participants on the translational scene – namely computers – do not have the ability to reflect on their own choices in this way and are merely programmed to carry out a task. This does not mean that their presence does not have ethical implications, perhaps on the contrary. In 'Ethical Issues Regarding Machine(-assisted) Translation of Literary Texts,' Taivalkoski-Shilov analyses previous academic voices on ethical issues related to the use of machine and machine-assisted translation in general, and literary translation in particular. It has been claimed that the growing use

of technology within the field of literary translation entails a number of potentially negative consequences, such as poor quality output, the undermining of the human translator's sense of control over the translation process (in cases of non-intuitive interfaces), and a greater strain on the literary translator's already poor working conditions (with regard to tight deadlines and unimpressive levels of remuneration). When it comes to product quality in translated narratives, Taivalkoski-Shilov brings special attention to how the technological voice – often regarded negatively as 'noise' – might wreak havoc with the complex interplay of different voices in literary texts, an interplay that perhaps makes such texts particularly unsuited to treatment by an insentient agent. To balance out this view, however, Taivalkoski-Shilov shows how some scholars and practitioners have viewed machine translation as a morally superior translational agent precisely by virtue of its neutral approach to the task, while others see it as a provider of a positive, aesthetic dimension in text production.

The contribution entitled 'Invisible or Invincible? Professional Integrity, Ethics and Voice in Public Service Interpreting' (Skaaden) brings up a classical clash of voices on ethics within the area of public service interpreting: should interpreters translate each utterance as closely as possible, acting as a neutral, objective mediator (i.e. be 'invisible'), or should they take a more active role in the arbitration between public service officials and their interlocutors (typically someone in an inferior position), 'helping out' in one way or another (i.e. be 'invincible')? The answer to this question is far from obvious, and Skaaden shows that while on the one hand, invisibility is misleading as a metaphor for objectivity because the interpreter's role is never devoid of personal interpretations and agency, going too far in the other direction (towards the invincibility pole) is also not desirable, since it prevents the interlocutors in the communicative situation to achieve full access to the communicative elements that are needed to gain a holistic overview of the communication. It is suggested that the solution to the predicament consists in a greater degree of

professionalization of the interpreting profession, with regard to both its performative and its organizational aspects.

Clashes between voices on ethics also figure strongly in the contribution by Englund-Dimitrova, 'Changing Footings on *Jacob's Ladder*: Dealing with Sensitive Issues in Dual-role Mediation on a Swedish TV Show', in which a 1980s talk show host, who is also a trained interpreter, interviews the popular Soviet singer Alla Pugacheva in Russian and at the same time interprets the interview into Swedish. Two different sets of ethics are related to the two roles: the ethics of entertainment, which pays attention to entertainment, comfort and culture value orientation, and the ethics of interpreting, which is guided by impartiality, neutrality and accuracy. Although these two may clash, the article shows that the two different stances are used to the participants' advantage. In the studied case the role of talk show host is the predominant one, and entertainment ethics are thus given priority over interpreting ethics.

In 'Critical Analysis of Korean Court Rulings on Translators' Copyrights: On the Originality of Translation and Translators' Economic and Moral Rights', Park examines a series of South Korean disputes about translation copyright. Park looks into four cases in which South Korean translators alleged that their translations had been plagiarized or otherwise reused in illegal ways. The Korean courts concluded that translations can display originality, albeit only with respect to certain elements such as words, phrases, style and tone of voice, with elements such as plot, setting and characters being considered the provenance of the original author. Furthermore, the Korean courts defended the moral and economic rights of the translators. This leads Park to conclude that it is a lack of translation reproduction standards and corresponding licences, rather than any perceived 'derivative' status of translations, that leads to infringements of the translators' copyrights. With a reference to Kim (2016), Park furthermore suggests that much would be gained

if translated books were classified into different kinds of reproductive work, depending on what and how much is reproduced from an original work, much like the popular music industry differentiates between cover, remake, adaptation and sampling licences.

In her contribution ‘The (Un-)ethical Interpreting Researcher: Ethics, Voice and Discretionary Power in Interpreting Research’, Tiselius introduces the notion of discretionary power, defined as the leeway for making conscientious decisions when facing situations where different voices, interests and ethical demands clash. Professional guidelines might help professionals in deciding which course of action to take, but sometimes they will feel compelled to use their discretionary power to make decisions that are *not* in accordance with the standards of behaviour expected within the profession. This holds for practitioners but also for researchers. Tiselius focuses on how the handling of the ethical aspects related to issues such as collecting, analysing and reporting on research data may often be complicated by the interpreting researcher being also an active interpreter and thus possibly a colleague of the research participants. The dual role implies that the researcher has to balance between two ethical systems (research ethics and interpreting ethics), and in some cases there may also be a clash with personal ethics. Neither researchers nor interpreters are supposed to interfere in the processes they observe or interpret, but they may feel compelled to do so because of personal ethics if the requirement of not to interfere clashes with for example the interests of a sick child. In such situations, discretionary power is of the utmost importance for the interpreting researcher, Tiselius concludes.

Generally, not much attention has been paid to translation and interpreting *research ethics*, both when the research is carried out (see Tiselius) and when it is published, the latter being the subject of Valdeón’s contribution to this issue, ‘Translation Studies and the Ethics of Publishing’. Emphasizing the current imperative of not only publishing but of ‘publishing fast’ (for the career of the academics and for the international standing of their institutions), Valdeón looks into the

relationships between publishers, authors and referees. He sheds light on a series of ethical issues related to, for instance, the bibliometric ranking of journals, the emergence of open access platforms, cases of plagiarism and self-plagiarism, or of quoting (or *not* quoting) potential referees. To prevent potential un-ethical practices in the publishing process, Valdeón pleads for more explicit standards concerning the collaboration between publishers, authors and referees, and furthermore recommends a higher level of trust between the parties involved.

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