

AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
International Relations Department
Chair of Diplomatic Translation
Translation business in the field of international and legal relations
“Simultaneous Translation of Monologue and Dialogical Speech”
2022-2023 academic year fall semester

Lecture 15

Module 3: Modern concepts of Translation Studies

Lecture 15: Interpreter's professionalism and ethics

Plan of the lecture

1. Introduction
2. Professional ethics in interpreter training
3. Conclusion
4. References

Aspects of the lecture

1. A possible starting point: the AIIC code
2. Confidentiality
3. Collegiality
4. Professionalism

Goals of the lecture

1. Explain why neutrality is important in SI
2. Identify aspects of diplomacy in SI situations
3. Familiarize with the AIIC code

Basic concepts

Teleconference Interpreting, Videoconference Interpreting, Audioconference Interpreting, Video Remote Interpreting, Multiscreen Video Remote Interpreting, and etc.

Professional ethics are addressed in most interpreter training courses I am aware of, but, as mentioned below, the treatment it is given is perhaps not always fully thought through, systematic or sufficiently detailed. That is why I felt it useful to put together some ideas on the subject for training purposes. As someone who is a professional interpreter and neither a full-

time trainer nor a theoretician, my comments are based purely on experience as an interpreter and as a witness of training courses, and are thus empirical in nature. I suspect I shall make no contribution to the theory of translation studies and perhaps not say anything particularly original, but hope that these comments will be useful for trainers reflecting on how to deal with professional ethics in their courses. Lastly in introduction, I stress that my experience as an interpreter is within the institutions of the European Union, and so my comments will no doubt appear biased towards that particular context, for which I crave the indulgence of readers working in a different context. At the same time, these comments cannot be understood to represent the views of the interpreting service of the European Commission (SCIC), the European Commission itself, nor indeed of the European Union or any institution or body thereof. They are merely my own personal views.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of inculcating into students the right understanding of professional ethics and their acceptance.

Ethics are particularly important, I believe, inter alia for the following reason. To some extent interpretation is a profession at risk. It is all too easy for delegates in meetings and politicians who may have to decide on budgets for interpretation in international organisations to criticise interpreters. Interpreters can never be sure that the profession has a stable medium to long term future ahead of it. It is therefore important that our clients be as satisfied as possible and that the good repute of the profession be protected. That good repute depends on two basic factors: the quality of our work and high standards of professional ethics. As students move towards becoming our colleagues and part of the interpreting corps, it is therefore indispensable that they be not just good interpreters, but that they are led to meet high ethical standards.

There is an ambiguity about the word “ethics” in English, and before dealing with the basic ideas of professional ethics it is necessary to clarify what is being referred to here.

In its general acceptation one takes “ethics” as referring to the problem of applying moral tenets in a specific situation. There are therefore, for example, issues relating to ethics in medicine. On the one hand it is the duty of a doctor to give a patient the best possible chance of recovery. On the other hand when a patient is terminally ill and in great suffering, a doctor has the duty to reduce that suffering as much as possible. When these two duties are in conflict, how does the doctor behave? These are amongst the most important questions facing human beings. As such, they deserve to be discussed with students insofar as they impinge on their future professional activities. We want our students to be enlightened citizens who are capable of taking into account ethical issues and making careful and well-informed decisions in their future life.

Genuine and very tough ethical issues may arise for interpreters, particularly in public service interpreting, in hospitals, in asylum procedures, or in court

interpreting. They are likely to arise for those interpreters working in war zones, and here one must pay tribute to the tremendous work done by Professor Barbara Moser-Mercer in this connection.

Further, there is now a move towards taking ethical issues on board more in the training of conference interpreters, the specific profession we are concerned with here. For example, one can quote from the abstract of Clare Donovan's article in the special issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* devoted to ethics and the curriculum¹.

“In marked contrast to research on court and community interpreting, in which ethics has long been addressed, research on conference interpreting has tended to focus on cognitive aspects of the interpreting process. In addition, ethical issues have not usually been addressed explicitly in the classroom. Recently, however, a shift in emphasis in both research and training can be observed, with closer attention being paid to the role of the conference interpreter within a complex communicative situation. Many training programmes now incorporate explicit modules on ethics. Thus, in many ways conference interpreting has seen a shift towards considerations previously more typical of community and court interpreting” (page 109).

Follow-up questions

1. Why are professional ethics important?
2. What do we mean by “professional ethics”?
3. Speak about working conditions of RSI

References

1. Braun, S. and Taylor, J. (eds.) (2011) *Videoconference and Remote Interpreting in Criminal*
2. Moser-Mercer, B., Künzli, A. & Korac, M. (1998). Prolonged turns in interpreting: Effects on quality, physiological and psychological stress (pilot study). *Interpreting* 3 (1), 47–64.
3. Buck, M. (2010). Much ado about something remote: Stress and performance in remote interpreting. *Interpreting*, 12 (2), 214–247