



Personal and Professional Ethics in Interpreting: Conflict or Harmony?

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Abstract

This article explores the conflict between the personal and the professional modes of ethics in professional interpreting. The parameters against which an interpreter's performance may be judged as ethical or otherwise include: accuracy, confidentiality, impartiality/objectivity, accountability, and integrity. Theoretically, professional interpreters are assumed to mediate between the source and target languages without real or potential conflict of interest that may adversely affect the delivery of their services. To examine this question, the data analyzed in this article were collected through a questionnaire, a review of tape scripts of interpreted materials, and personal interviews with interpreters. 35 professional interpreters, both consecutive and simultaneous, contributed. The analysis indicates that the personal mode of ethics is often triggered by ethnic, nationalistic, political, or ideological considerations. Adherence to the professional mode of ethics, on the other hand, is demonstrated in subduing the personal mode in favour of the established ethical values of the profession as intercultural mediation.

Keywords: ethics, interpreting, conflict, harmony, accountability, confidentiality, impartiality, integrity.