

Rethinking Teaching Ethics for Translation and Interpreting Students: Mona Baker's pedagogical proposal in practice in Blida2 University

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Abstract:

In Ethics and Deontology lectures, translation students must be encouraged to reflect and question their own values as well as those of their future clients where necessary. The curriculums should aim at developing a mindful consciousness regarding the impact of the imminent translators behaviors on a variety of communities, cultures and individuals and act consequently. Therefore, a reflection on how traditionally ethics of translation and deontology are introduced for translation students is necessary and proposing new alternatives, which can meet effectively the above objectives. The article exposes a field study on Blida2 university translation students, in which the researcher applied on 200 students Mona Baker's pedagogical rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology. The results show that the pedagogical tool shapes efficiently students attitudes towards ethics of translation and thereby enhances their critical thinking.

Keywords: Ethics and Deontology, Translation curriculums, Mona Baker

1. INTRODUCTION

Great efforts and interests are made in developing translation syllabuses and enhancing students' translation and interpreting abilities for facing their future profession challenges. However, very few interests have been made in developing the syllabuses for translation students regarding issues of ethics and deontology. Students are merely stimulated to follow and conform to existing professional codes of ethics, such as The International Chart of

Translators and Interpreters set by International Federation of Translators (International Federation of Translators, 2025). However, Professional codes largely emphasis on framing the translator client relationship on the perspective of economy (based on the traditional foundations: impartiality, accuracy and efficiency), rather than social responsibility or human dignity.

In an approach of applying Mona Baker's Pedagogical Rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology on Blida2 university students of translation, this article tries to demonstrate the importance of mentoring students' sense of accountability, professional engagement, social and civic responsibilities, and their awareness about technological advances and their major impact on the profession. Mona Baker (Baker M. a., 2011) urges teachers to introduce more critical thinking and mindful reflections into the curriculum. I conducted a pool on 200 translation students before debating in class on the ethical topics proposed in order to collect their first impressions and compare their reflections during the debate in class. The lecture concerns with enhancing the ability of students to balance one ethical obligation against another in authentic contexts of interaction, through encouraging students to adopt more reflective acts towards varied eventual future tasks, and thus preparing them to deal with unexpected ethical dilemmas in a different contexts.

The results show that Mona Baker's Pedagogical Rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology helps in raising ethical challenges in classroom, allows students to debate and reflect on the ethical implications from different perspectives.

2. ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY OF TRANSLATION

Teaching Ethics can be linked to the oldest extant ethical writings of ancient Egypt and Babylonia. Ethics is studied and recognized as moral codes, or what is ethically right or bad and many scholars have found it more significant to combine the moral and ethical instructions and behaviors.

Ethics in Translation Studies aim at codifying translatorial behaviors in a way that supports and guides the profession of translators and interpreters. However, this codification is typically carried out by practitioners rather than scholars. It is a rule-based methodology; a structure which organizes a duty- or rights-based ethics. It seeks to put norms and guide what translators and interpreters ought to do, rather than their freedom and individual responsibility.(Davis 2014).

Within Translation Studies, deontology is strongly related too to applied ethics. It aims at training future professionals to adhere to established ethical rules, since these ethical rules are frequently regarded as a fundamental component of translators and interpreters training. Unfortunately, teaching metaethical issues is neglected and the majority of attention has been focused on a set of professional dilemma solutions. Consequently, training Translators and interpreters able to face constant professional dilemmas and take decisions that have moral implications with a Free Critical Thinking should be any teaching curriculum ultimate goal.

3. TRADITIONAL ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY OF TRANSLATION CURRICULUMS

Traditional curriculums tend to discuss many translation principles, such as Loyalty, Fidelity, and Justice, in relation to mainly equivalence and accuracy not in an ethical approach. These principles are generally introduced in Translation Studies or Translation Methodology modules.

However, the notion of Fidelity is presented by Antoine Berman as a key aspect of the text-based ethics translation approach (Berman, 1992). In fact, in an approach of preserving the foreign, Berman explains that the translator transports the reader to new worlds and cultures, enhances his tolerance and promotes and not to content with the domestic.

Besides, Venuti (Venuti 2002). views Justice on ethical principles. He emphasizes the visibility of translation and translators who have flexibility to introduce in their TTs foreign elements from the ST, to enhance cultural exchanges and tolerance respecting however the meaning effectively ensuring communication.

Nord (Nord, 2007) goes further explaining that loyalty transcend the linguistic level to a more pragmatic approach to the text, in other words, from micro-level to macro-level considerations. This functionalist approach views translation decisions according to their type, and purpose, which is linked to deontology rather than translation procedures teaching.

Though, *Translation Codes of Ethics* illustrated mainly in The International Chart of Translators and Interpreters are the only fundamental basis of Traditional Curriculums in teaching Ethics and Deontology.

In our study, ethics and deontology module (Credit: 01, Coefficient: 01) is introduced for translation students at Blida2 University until the fifth semester in 10 lectures only. Its main objective, as mentioned in the curriculum (htt1), is - To learn about work ethics and the relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks, and the lectures content should focus on:

- Definition of professional ethics and its most important basic principles
- The most important terms and definitions related to professional ethics
- Direct engagement with texts related to work ethics and etiquette in various contexts and their application.

The lectures encourage students to follow and conform to existing professional codes of ethics, without giving them tools to enhance their sense of reflection while confronting real professional life experiences, where they have to balance between ethical obligation against another.

The curriculum proposed references are additional evidences, which assert our analysis, they focus an already set of values and ethics regardless students' critical reflection:

- Charter of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
- Amal Yennoun, Charter of Academic Ethics: Combating Academic Plagiarism in Algeria, Conference Proceedings Series, Center for Scientific Research, Algiers, 150/07/11

- Balal Khalaf Al-Sakarneh, Work Ethics, Dar Al-Musriya for Printing and Publishing, 2018
- HALL J. Kay, Nursing Ethics and Law, WB Saunders Company, 1996.

Translation teachers perceive the codes of ethics as guidelines and standards for the ethical behaviour of translators. They serve as a moral map, helping translators to deal with complex situations and take decisions that line up with the values of the profession, and ethical principles such as accuracy, confidentiality.

To sum up, the curriculum does not give any guidelines to teachers for enhancing students' critical thinking on ethical practices in translation. It rather leaves the matter to teachers' subjectivity while teaching students translation methods and theories.

4. MONA BAKER'S PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL

Ethics, as a subfield of Translation Studies, seeks to define what is good and evil, right and wrong, in translation practices. Translation studies categorizes ethics and distinguishes between normative ethics, applied ethics, and metaethics. **Normative ethics** is the study of ethical reasoning and the establishment of norms or standards for translation practices.

While **metaethics** stays in a more theoretical and abstract domain and examines the premises of ethical claims, **applied ethics** seeks to apply normative ethical theories to real-world issues and make ethical judgments pertinent to one's decisions in daily professional practices.

Mona Baker's Pedagogical Proposal can be classified under applied ethics cooperative learning. Where Students and teachers reflect on real professional world issues to enhance students' reflection and judgment for taking ethical translational decisions.

In a report (Baker M. , 2013), Baker explains that effective training in ethics must be reconfigured in an open, supportive space for reflection on authentic potentially controversial issues, where teachers refrain from imposing particular ethical paths.

Baker (Baker M. , 2013) proposes a Classroom Debate as a pedagogical tool which may be centered on one of three types of material.

The first is a theoretical controversial issue to be debated as a general ethical question; for example, translating or not a particular type of text, or for a particular type of client. **Classroom Debate activities** encourage students to reflect on their own ethical values and principles; and help them to develop arguing skills, especially when they are encouraged to present and defend not only their point of view but also the counter one. Clare Donovan (Donovan, 2008) and her ESIT students concluded in her lecture that all ethical decisions must be situated; for instance, she argues that translating a speech of a far right speaker like Jean-Marie Le Pen of the French National Front Party, regarding ethics and moral values, depends on his audience. Many students, and Clare Donovan herself, judge that it is unethical to interpret for Le Pen addressing his supporters, since this would help him promote his ideology. However, they add interpreting for him at the European Union can be ethical since many delegates, to be able to argue against, need to understand what views he is advocating as accurately as possible.

The second type of activity is **Role Play**. It aims to prepare students for dealing mindfully and ethically in various possible situations. Glielmi and Long (Glielmi, 1999) provide a sample of such simulated scenarios, involving sign language interpreters working with violence victims.

Role Play activity, using authentic situations, provides an opportunity for discussing the implications of future translators acts and choices.

Finally, **student diaries or journals** can also provide excellent opportunities for individual reflection on ethical or unethical situations, as discussed in Abdalla (Abdallah, 2011).

Baker (Baker M. , 2013) exposed the introduction of Ethics into the Curriculum at Leeds and University of East Anglia, where her ideas are put into practice. The students output is well described in Drugan and Megone (Drugan, 2011) survey on how ethics might be introduced in the translation and interpreting curriculum, with numerous examples of case studies and activities.

Baker (Baker M. , 2013) concludes that Ethics and deontology lectures should prepare students or the future translators to act responsibly as citizens, rather than merely as professionals.

5. FIELD STUDY

With the perspective of enhancing social responsibility and human dignity in our future translators rather than focusing on Professional codes based on the traditional foundations: impartiality, accuracy and efficiency, I tried to apply “Mona Baker’s Pedagogical Rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology” on Blida2 university students of translation.

I conducted a poll on 200 translation students before debating in class on authentic ethical issues (most of my samples are taken and adapted from Baker report (Baker M. , 2013)). The purpose was to collect their first impressions and compare their reflections during the debate in class. The lectures aim at enhancing the ability of students to balance one ethical obligation against another, through encouraging students to have a more reflective and critical attitude while taking professional decisions, and then preparing them to deal with unexpected ethical dilemmas in a variety of contexts. I focused on three main translator spheres of responsibilities: Accountability, Professional Engagement, Social and Civic Responsibilities, Technological Advances.

4.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

According to Mona Baker, ‘Accountability is now a central concern in all professions. It requires every professional and every citizen to demonstrate that he or she is cognizant of the impact of their behaviour on others, aware of its legal implications, and prepared to take responsibility for its consequences.’ (Baker, 2014, pp. 1-2). She considers the principles of fidelity, truth, responsibility, justice, and commitment to be under the accountability umbrella.

The sample aims to demonstrate whether students are able to recognize and be aware of the legal implications of their behaviours, and whether they are well prepared to act responsibly and legally.

The sample

What do you think about the arrest and trial of the Arabic translator and interpreter Mohamed Yousry in the US in 2005, who was accused to aid an Egyptian terrorist organisation after translating a letter from a defendant to his lawyer, which this later released to the press as a legal strategy . Mohamed Yousry was convicted by a New York jury even though he did not had a hand in this strategy and was not present when the lawyer contacted the press.

The Analysis

The majority of the students (90%) were convinced that what happened to Mohamed Yousry was not legal since his responsibilities are limited to the good translation and loyalty to his client ie respecting and keeping his secrets and what his client did with the document is not his responsibility. The 10% rest of the class declared that the profession is very risky, with any argumentation.

The debate in class highlighted the fact that translators can be held accountable not only for *how* they translate but also for the content, provenance and circulation of *what* they translate.

It was very difficult to have the accurate students' thoughts on the case after the debate, as it was the first debate lecture we had, but they could argument their point of view on translator accountability and exchange their ideas. At the end of the lecture, the majority were convinced that the profession has larger legal obligations that they assumed.

Students were asked, for assessment purposes, to search for similar legal ambiguities where professional translators found themselves. Their proposal shows clearly their enhanced sense of accountability. (Their reading of media reports, next to cinema productions on translators trials and legal responsibilities were for a very good help.)

4.2 PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH ETHICS

The sample aims at making students aware of the fact that despite their priority is to earn a living and being payed by their clients, they should not turn into "mercenary experts, able to fight under the flag of any purpose able to pay them" (Pym 1996: 338). They should instead voice their opinions and debating ethical and unethical practices explicitly, despite the fact that their clients often think translators are apolitical and unengaged.

The sample

A medical translation agency, Foreign Exchange Translations, received the following email from a medical translator who has worked for a long-standing device client: "I'm not sure if you were aware, but there is a boycott in Mexico regarding travel, business, services, etc. related to Arizona and companies based there It has come to my attention that [medical device company] is a company based in Arizona, U.S.A.

I offer my sincerest apologies, but I have to terminate my contribution to this project due to my collaboration with this boycott. My timing is highly unfortunate. I realize this will affect our working relationship. I hope you can understand that had I known this earlier, I would have informed you appropriately.”

Explaining the context of the email:

In April 2010 a large boycott against the state of Arizona which passed a controversial immigration legislation that gave the police power to detain illegal immigrants and arrest them. The poll posed the following question to students:
Is it the right thing to quit work for political reasons? Explain why.

The Analysis

The results show that the majority of students ie 50% of respondents said ‘Yes, always’ explaining that they are freelancers so they can quit whenever they want; 35% said ‘Yes, sometimes’ explaining that only if they have not been paid yet; and only 15% said ‘No, never. Explaining that they must not quit after engagement.

After debate in lecture and discussion on the context and the main question “**Do you refuse translations on ethical, moral, political, or religious grounds?”**

Almost the same results were collected ie the majority of the students maintained that they cannot separate translation work from personal principles, beliefs and moral values.

4.3 SOCIAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Many translators are engaged in different Social and Civic organisations and associations in their communities and even in international ones: these include human rights defenders, humanitarian acts in wars, and invasions. Thus, the translators’ involvement and visibility necessitate high ethical judgement (Baker, 2006). To highlight the translator social and civic responsibilities, I gave my students the following task:

The sample

Prepare a list of domains in which you, as translator, can have a social and civic impact on your community.

The Analysis

90% of my students admitted not understanding the idea of civic and social involvement, the rest 10% ignored the task, which reflects the absence of the sense of involvement nowadays students in their communities. I started my lecture by showing an Algerian media campaign against violence against women, and then I asked them what they could do as translators to help circulating this campaign. By the end of the lecture students were able to propose different domains where they can have a civic and social impact on their communities and even on world communities as translating for women children defence organisations and associations, empowering girls’ education, voicing the Algerian cultural heritage.

4.4 TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

The sample aims at drawing students' attention to the increased threat from new technologies and practices, most importantly machine translation, IA devices and crowdsourcing, which pose a wide range of ethical questions that are rarely addressed in the classroom.

The sample

This is a Twitter crowdsourcing 'Translation Agreement'

Terms and conditions do apply.

- **We may show you confidential, yet to be released products or features and you must be willing to keep those secret.**
- **You'll be volunteering to help out Twitter and will not be paid.**
- **Twitter owns the rights to the translations you provide. You are giving them to us so that we can use them however, we want.**

Among other things, Twitter plans to share the translations with the Twitter development community. We want to help make all of the other great Twitter apps, not just Twitter.com, available in your language.

The poll posed the following question to students:

Are you interested in volunteering for such initiatives? Why?

The Analysis

The results suggest that the majority of students ie as 90% of respondents chose 'Yes, always'; explaining their answer that their main objective is training; 10% chose 'Yes, sometimes' explaining their answer that their main objective is training; and 0% chose 'No, never, explaining their answer that they never do work for free.

However, after debating from an ethical perspective with students, highlighting

The impact of **volunteering translation** on the profession, as the client or the company that commands and profits from the translator's effort. And noting that some translators consider crowdsourcing initiatives such as Twitter's unethical and damaging to the profession whereas others are motivated to participate for a variety of reasons (McDonough-Dolmaya, 2012). The majority of students agreed on the ethical impact of new technologies, machine translation, IA devices and crowdsourcing, and the need to reflect on these developments and assume an ethically informed position towards them.

6. RESULTS ANALYSIS

Comparing my teaching experience (using the ethics and deontology traditional syllabuses, which stimulated students to follow and conform to existing professional codes of ethics, and applying Mona Baker's Pedagogical Rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology on Blida2 university students of translation) demonstrates the importance of mentoring students' sense of accountability, professional engagement, social and civic responsibilities, and their awareness about technological advances and their major impact on the profession. Students show, by the end of the semester, the ability to have reflective acts towards varied eventual future tasks, and thus well prepared to deal with unexpected ethical dilemmas in a different contexts.

However, teachers have to assess their students at the end of each semester. They must, nevertheless, not limit their objective to check their understanding of the content. Their assessment should promote students' critical thinking.

How assessing the performance of students in terms of ethical decision-making is very problematic. In fact, There is no criteria on which teachers can rely on to assess the quality of students' reasoning and reflection, and their involvement within an ethical issue from different perspectives, rather than assessing the final decision reached.

To illustrate this issue, I selected for my students' evaluation, an authentic ethical case for student assessment which was designed as followed: "Katharine Gun worked for the British intelligence agency GCHQ as a translator between English and Chinese until 2003, when she leaked secret documents to the Observer newspaper and was arrested for treason. The documents related to illegal activities by the United States and Britain in relation to the then impending invasion of Iraq. They exposed a highly secret memorandum by a top US official that outlined surveillance of a number of delegations with swing votes on the UN Security Council. The purpose of the surveillance was to gain information that can help the US to pressure members of the delegations in question to support a resolution in favour of the invasion of Iraq. In a short essay (one page length), present your reflection on Katharine Gun behavior regarding translation Ethics and Deontology. Students were encouraged to conduct additional research on the case.

The majority of my students could provide arguments to defend their point of view on the case and criticize the opposing point of views. In class they understood clearly that there is no good and correct answer, but strong and clear arguments;

Their arguments and debate in class show clearly the enhancement of their critical thinking on ethical perspectives.

However, the assessment criteria are still subjective and evaluating students critical thinking needs more objective criteria. A deeper research on evaluating students' critical thinking and developing assessment criteria and materials are crucial for enhancing teaching and learning methods in general, and enhancing students' critical thinking on ethical perspectives in particular.

7. CONCLUSION

In fact, Great efforts and interests must be made in developing translation syllabuses regarding issues of ethics and deontology. Stimulating students to follow and conform to existing professional codes of ethics (such as International Federation of Translators, 2025) is no longer efficient in developing an enhancing their social responsibility or human dignity.

Traditional curriculum does not give any guidelines to teachers for enhancing students' critical thinking on ethical practices in translation. It rather leaves the matter to teachers' subjectivity while teaching students translation methods and theories.

Since, Traditional curriculums tend to discuss many translation principles, such as Loyalty, Fidelity, and Justice, in relation to mainly equivalence and accuracy not in an ethical approach. These principles are generally introduced in Translation Studies or Translation Methodology modules.

Applying Mona Baker's Pedagogical Rethinking on teaching ethics and deontology on Blida2 university students of translation, demonstrates the importance of mentoring students' sense of accountability, professional engagement, social and civic responsibilities, and their awareness about technological advances and their major impact on the profession. Hence, debating ethical controversial issues and authentic cases, as a pedagogical tool, that raise ethical challenges in classroom allows students to practice both arguing freely, and thinking the ethical implications from different perspectives.

However, accurate assessments should be developed that focus on the quality of reasoning and reflection, and the extent to which the student engages with an ethical issue from different perspectives.

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