

CHAPTER 2

RETHINKING TRANSLATION ETHICS IN THE AGE OF VARIATION: TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR VARIATIONAL TRANSLATION ETHICS

Rongguang Yang *

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the ethical issues raised by variational translation practices that involve adaptation, condensation, omission, and rewriting. While such practices have become common in areas like journalism, advertising, education, and AI-assisted translation, their ethical dimensions have not received enough critical attention. Existing models of translation ethics often rely on fidelity as a core value, but this standard does not always account for the demands and constraints faced by translators working with variation. Taking this gap as a starting point, the chapter argues for the construction of a more flexible and context-sensitive ethical framework. Drawing on both external norms and the translator's own moral reasoning, it outlines how ethical decisions are shaped by institutional pressures, technological tools, and genre conventions. The aim is not to propose fixed rules but to offer a way of thinking about ethical responsibility in situations where translation is not simply a matter of equivalence, but of negotiation, judgment, and care.

Keywords: *Variational Translation, Translation Ethics, Translator Responsibility, Ethical Decision-Making.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, when French translation theorist Antoine Berman (1984) introduced the research agenda of “translation ethics”, the ethical dimension of translation has gradually emerged as a prominent field of academic inquiry. This expanding domain has witnessed contributions from scholars both within and beyond China, encompassing a wide range

* School of Foreign Languages and Trade, Hubei University of Automotive Technology, Shiyan, China.

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This chapter is a part of the book, '*Variational Translation: Practical and Theoretical Explorations*' edited by Dr. Chuanmao Tian, Dr. Juntao Deng and Dr. Zhonglian Huang.

ISBN: 978-93-49926-76-9 (ebk); ISBN: 978-93-49926-38-7 (hbk); ISBN: 978-93-49926-07-3 (pbk)

The ebook and print version of this book are available at:
<https://dx.doi.org/10.46679/9789349926769>

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