

Revisiting interpreters' roles and ethics

Our sense of self, our identities and our values impact on everything we do and what roles we choose to take on in interactions. This has been confirmed in numerous sociological and social psychology studies. However, interpreting codes of conduct and users' expectations persistently stipulate interpreters to be invisible and to behave like machines.

We interpreters are powerful linguistic and cultural enablers. But we are in the meantime paradoxically powerless as we are expected to behave like a mere word processor. Interactions that call upon interpreting are more than often complex, fluid and streaked with power imbalance between institutional representatives and individuals. Our own self-perceptions and values do come into play while facilitating these complex interactions. An in-depth understanding of this will contribute to improving the public service interpreting as a recognised profession.

Interpreters are humans whose fundamental humanities must be acknowledged and understood. Very little effort has been made to achieve this. It's time that this issue be addressed. As an interpreter and interpreting researcher, I am very keen to explore with you, the professional interpreters, how your sociocultural identities, your perceptions of self and who you are, and your values impact on your interpreting decisions and your role management in interactions.

To this end, I shall hold online focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews with the interpreters in August and September via Zoom. Your participation will be an important part of the research project on revisiting interpreters' roles and ethics. The project will inform and improve interpreting ethical guidelines, and produce advisory reports on use of interpreting for the public bodies and agencies.

Please get in touch with me via email roleproject8@gmail.com, or linkedin Xiaohui (Helen) Yuan, including the following information: your name and contact details, your language pairs, your availability in August and September, years of practice as an interpreter, and fields of expertise. If you are not available until after September, please also contact me and we can arrange separate online meetings.

Thank you and I very much look forward to hearing from you.

All the best wishes

Xiaohui

Dr. Xiaohui Yuan

Bio: Dr. Xiaohui Yuan is a researcher and the course director of the MA in Chinese-English Interpreting with Translation at the University of Birmingham. She has been an interpreter for the UN agencies in Geneva and the public services in the UK. She has published a solely authored monograph and peer-reviewed articles on translation and interpreting studies. She was the Principal Investigator of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project on Interpreting in International Mediation.