

# TEXTUAL, MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VOICES OF TRANSLATION

*K. Taivalkoski-Shilov*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Languages and Translation Studies  
University of Turku  
Koskenniemenkatu 4, 20014 Turku, Finland  
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*The concept of voice has engendered a growing amount of research in translation studies in the last decades, especially regarding literary translation. Voice is typically used in studies that investigate stylistic or structural characteristics of translated texts, intertextuality and other forms of multivocality and ethical questions related to agency, ideology and power in translation and interpreting. The first part of this article defines two essential concepts related to voice in translation – voice and text – and describes the state of the art of research in this field. The second part aims to deepen the discussion on voice in translation studies by introducing the notion of the voice of conscience from philosophy and political science and the notion of inner voices from psychology.*

**Keywords:** translation, interpreting, voice, text, ethics, voice of conscience, inner voice.

## 1. Voice as a concept in translation studies

In the last three decades the notion of ‘voice’ has become a productive concept and tool for text analysis especially in research on literary translation. Ever since the seminal texts written by Mossop (1983), Folkart (1991), Hermans (1996) and Schiavi (1996), this notion and its neighboring concepts (e.g., Lefevere’s 1992 idea of translation as ‘rewriting’) have enabled translation scholars to pinpoint textual and social phenomena of translation that had escaped earlier researchers, not only in the field of translation studies but also in literary and cultural studies (see, e.g., Schiavi 1996, 2, 9–16, Susam Sarajeva 2006, 7–8, 15).

Folkart (1996, 127) has defined voice as ‘a cluster of textual features that gives the impression of being attributable to a single source of enunciation’ (Taivalkoski-Shilov’s (2018, 7) translation). Voice is then part of a ‘text’ that could be defined as a “part or result of an act” that has “a purpose in communicating in a concrete context” and has material existence in some per-

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ceivable form (see Johansen & Larsen 2002, 118)<sup>2</sup>. According to my interpretation, the textual features that are the components of voice can appear in several modes; most typically they appear in oral or written form, but also other visual, auditive, as well as tactual forms are possible since texts may consist of sounds, writing, numbers, symbols, images, graphs, gestures (e. g., sign language) and material that is perceivable also to the touch (e. g., tactile interpreting, drumming).<sup>3</sup> This is especially true of texts studied within translation and interpreting studies, which go far beyond printed texts and are often multimodal. Furthermore, the textual features of voice emanate – or have been created to make believe that they emanate – from the same identity, as if they had the same textual DNA, so to say. Consequently, a voice can be traced by searching for recurring patterns expressing a “semantic and axiological belief system” (see Bakhtin [1981]2004, 304–305) in a text.

Empirical research on voice in translation does not only involve analysis of translated texts, their originals and parallel texts (non-translated texts in the same genre, written in the target language). Research can also be conducted on the ‘contextual voices’ of translation, that is, voices that “arise in the context around the translated text, and not as part of the translated text in its strictest sense” (Alvstad & Assis Rosa 2015, 4). In such cases the object of analysis often comprises voices of real people who “produce, promote and write about translations” (Alvstad & Assis Rosa 2015, 4): translators, interpreters, editors, publishers, authors, critics, readers, journalists, teachers, translation scholars, translator and interpreting trainers and so forth. Contextual voices can yield valuable information about the “complex machinery in motion behind every single translation” (Alvstad, Greenall, Jansen & Taivalkoski-Shilov 2017b, 3), not only during the translation process but also related to the reception of translated texts.

The concept of ‘voice’ has traveled to translation studies from several origins: general language, the theory of enunciation, narratology, stylistics, feminist theory, and linguistics, among others. Consequently, it is a polysemous, complex concept which has both metaphorical and non-metaphorical meanings (Alvstad 2013; Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet 2013, 1–2). The majority of studies published on voice in translation studies are related to the following phenomena,<sup>4</sup> which are partly overlapping and often interrelated:

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<sup>2</sup> My definition of ‘text’ comes from semiotics since most glossaries and dictionaries of translation studies do not include a definition of text (naturally most have a definition of ‘source text’ and ‘target text’, but not of text alone). Johansen & Larsen (2002, 118) write: “In short, a *text* is a part or result of an act, whereas *signs* are potential conveyors of meaning which can be actualized (activated) in a text or as a text. Texts are not simply locatable results of acts; they have material existence – even if only sound frequencies – and they can therefore be perceived in their distinctiveness and variety in relation to other phenomena and to other texts, or as individual copies of the same text. And they can be perceived by a single or practically unlimited number of receivers.” Furthermore, Johansen & Larsen (2002, 119) point out that “any object can function as a text, i. e. be included as a conveyor of meaning in a sign-process, a semiosis.”

<sup>3</sup> In theory, a text can also consist of olfactory and gustatory material. Such texts do not, however, (yet) belong to the domain of translation studies.

<sup>4</sup> My estimation is based on the following sources: Benjamins Translation Studies Bibliography on-line and BITRA: Bibliography of Interpreting and Translation.



- style in translation
- narrative structure and point of view in translation
- quality in translation and interpreting
- translation/interpreting and ideology
- textual ownership, visibility and audibility in translation/interpreting
- social roles in translation/interpreting
- power relations in the production or reception of translated/interpreted text
- intertextuality and influence in translation
- the impact of translated/interpreted texts on translators, interpreters and readers
- multimodal and -semiotic aspects of voice
- theoretical considerations

It should be noted that the above-mentioned phenomena may be discussed without explicit reference to the term ‘voice’ even within what could be called the ‘voice paradigm’, under headings such as ‘style’, ‘multilingualism’, ‘hybridity’, ‘agency’, ‘visibility’ and so forth (Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet 2013, 2). The common denominator between studies that either explicitly or implicitly refer to the term ‘voice’ is that they often deal with the overarching themes of identity, social roles and power in translation and interpreting and discuss how they materialize as textual traces.

An essential element in applying the notion of voice to translation studies is to highlight the subjectivity of any type of human communication, including translation and interpreting. This helps, on the one hand, in rectifying uninformed assumptions about translation and interpreting and, on the other hand, in empowering translators and interpreters, who for centuries have been accused of being traitors. Translated and interpreted texts cannot be identical copies of their originals because they are always mediated and received in a different cultural, geographical, or at least temporal<sup>5</sup> context. Studies that have likened translating and interpreting to quoting and reported discourse (see Mossop 1983 and 1998; Folkart 1991; Taivalkoski-Shilov 2006; Hermans 2007, among others) have pointed out that modalities of reception and reframing affect all forms of reported utterances (Folkart 1991, 15, see also Chesterman & Baker 2008, 16, 19). In spite of the fact that translations are not identical copies of their originals, they usually mediate the message of the source text sufficiently well; translation is a matter of similarity, not absolute sameness (see Chesterman 2007).

Power is another central issue related to the notion of voice in translation. Folkart (1991) introduced the idea of translation as a conflict of enunciations. For Folkart (1991, 393–394) the main conflict in translation was between the translator and the author of the original text. Studies that have succeeded her book have stressed that the conflict concerns more agents of translation: co-translators, ghost translators, copy editors, publishers, critics and even ordinary readers (see Alvstad, Greenall, Jansen & Taivalkoski-Shilov 2017a). Jansen & Wegener (2013) coined the term ‘multiple translator-

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<sup>5</sup> In the case of simultaneous interpreting, the temporal context is almost the same, but still not identical.



ship' to draw attention to the agency of other parties in translation processes and their impact on translational products. The idea of multiple translatorship has helped to envisage translation and interpreting as a matter of constant circulation and confrontation between voices. Literary translations and their paratexts, as well as non-literary translations to a certain extent, involve several kinds of voices that reveal the "tangle of subjectivities" inherent in the production and reception of any translated text (Alvstad et al. 2017b, 3–4). The tangle of subjectivities does not only relate to textual phenomena such as hybridity or polyphony in translated fictional texts, where the 'translator's voice'<sup>6</sup> often adds into the multiplicity of voices of different characters, narrators and points of view (see Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet 2013, 3–9). Real persons engaging in translation matters can also become tangled, owing to conflicting interests, cultural differences and varying standards of what is good and bad practice (see Greenall, Alvstad, Jansen & Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2019, 641). Consequently, voice is closely related to the ethics of translation and interpreting because it is from the circulation and confrontation of voices and multiplicity of points of view that the necessity of an ethics of translation emerges in the first place.

In spite of the fact that research on voice in translation often addresses issues that have important ethical dimensions (see Greenall et al. 2019) and even though translation ethics discusses dilemmas between personal ethical convictions and professional ethical guidelines (see Chesterman & Baker 2008, 20–21) that are good examples of clashing voices within the individual mind, considerations on inner voices have been scarce in translation studies. The remainder of this article discusses these voices by investigating how the notion of voice has been addressed by some scholars in political science, philosophy and psychology. As we shall see, the inner, moral and psychological voices of translation are related to the textual and contextual voices of translation that have so far been the focus of the 'voices paradigm'.

## 2. The moral dimension of voice in translation

Van Wyke (2010, 111) writes that the ethics of translation "addresses what is considered the morally correct manner in which one should practice the task of rewriting a text in another language." Ethics of translation can be seen in a larger scope to embrace interpreting, aspects of research on translation and interpreting (conducting research, publishing, peer reviewing etc.) as well as translator and interpreter training. As Koskinen (2000, 14) points out, the ethics of translation presupposes a multiplicity of choice: there are several options for translating or interpreting a given text as well as for doing research on translation and interpreting. If this were not the case, there

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<sup>6</sup> "For Barbara Folkart the translator's voice manifests itself as deviations and interventions when the translator does not totally manage to hide her/his presence in the text. [...] Theo Hermans defines voice as a discursive presence but for him, too, the translator's discursive presence, or voice only becomes discernible when contextual factors oblige the translator to reveal her/himself." (Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet 2013, 5.)



would be no need for ethical considerations, which are necessary only when one has to choose between more than one option. And when a decision has been made, other parties – and the introspecting self (see below) – can judge the choice from the point of view of ethics and morality (Koskinen, 2000, 14). Making choices always involves responsibility (*ibid.*).

Ethical<sup>7</sup> considerations emanate from both collective and individual sources. Put differently, two kinds of voices seem to guide translatorial action: on the one hand, collective, external voices, which are nevertheless internalized, that is, mediated through the individual's socialized consciousness, and which articulate norms and common guidelines give relief in the abundance of possible choices (see Koskinen 2000, 15–16). As an example of an articulation of this kind of a collective, external voice one can mention the Translator's Charter published by FIT ([1963/1994] 2011), which lists general obligations of the translator, rights of the translator and also guidelines concerning the economic and social position of the translator as well as translators' associations on the national and international levels. On the other hand, there are inner voices that monitor the translator's behavior from an ethical point of view. In particular, there is the 'voice of conscience', which is a common metaphor both in general language and in Western ethico-political thought. This voice is an "internal voice of a moral injunction, the voice which issues warnings, commands, admonishments, the voice which cannot be silenced if one has acted wrongly [...]" (Dolar 2006, 83). The voice of conscience can be understood as the more or less solidified outcome of an individual's dialogical<sup>8</sup> interactions with external voices to reach their own, personal conclusions regarding right or wrong, good or bad. The influence of this voice may become especially perceptible in the situations mentioned above, where personal moral convictions clash with professional guidelines. For instance, I hypothesize that Katharine Gun, a British government translator, who was tried for treason because she had leaked to the newspapers an American top-secret request to bug United Nations (UN) diplomats with the aim to win a UN resolution that would authorize the invasion of Iraq (see Chesterman & Baker 2008, 20), was more influenced by the voice of her conscience than translators' professional codes that strictly prohibit divulging clients' secrets (see, e.g., FIT, Translator's Charter section I, 10). Gun reportedly commented on the case: "I didn't feel at all guilty about what I did, so I couldn't plead guilty even though I would get a more lenient sentence" (*The Guardian* 26 February 2004, Chesterman & Baker 2008, 20). She won her case thanks to the pleas of many international celebrities (Chesterman & Baker 2008, 20).

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<sup>7</sup> From this paragraph onwards until the concluding remarks the text had been initially written by myself and edited and amended by Annjo Klungervik Greenall. That version has been partly rewritten and completed with examples to make the text fit the whole argument of this article. I am very grateful to Greenall for her contribution.

<sup>8</sup> This formulation and the thoughts it represents are, of course, in no small measure inspired by the so-called 'dialogism' of M.M. Bakhtin (e.g. Bakhtin 1981).



Ethical reflection in the socialized individual can in fact be understood as “hearing voices” (Dolar, 2006, 83), or as an internalized dialogue between external suggestions and inner principle(s), between differing points of view. It was Socrates who outlined the main principles of Western ethics of conscience, on the basis of the notion of conscience found in Greek tragedies (Ojakangas, 2013, 213–218). In Plato’s Socratic dialogues *Apology* and *Hippias Major*, Socrates talks about voices that later philosophers have interpreted as voices of conscience: the voice of “a divine or spiritual sign” and that of a “close relative” that had rightfully guided his actions (Dolar, 2006, 83–84; Ojakangas, 2013, 214).

In the course of history there have been many shifts and reinterpretations in the understanding of the notion of conscience and its vehicle, voice. The Church fathers and other theologians, philosophers from antiquity to modern times, and psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan have all discussed the voice of conscience from different perspectives. Interestingly, the translation of this term has also had an impact on the way the concept has been understood: for instance, the influence of Saint Jerome on Western discussions on conscience is well known (Ojakangas, 2013, 3, 8, 41–42, 228–229). In spite of differing views on the locus and nature of conscience, the general consensus seems to be that the voice that speaks within us and guides our actions is not ours, but the voice of the “other”; it does not grow from within, but is molded by external influences. As to what this “other” is, opinions are divided: “is it God, nature, tradition, freedom, pure practical reason, parents, society, a crack in the ontological edifice of the universe, or what?” asks Ojakangas (2013, 8).

Furthermore, conscience has generally been regarded as the precondition of essential moral concepts such as duty, obligation, and responsibility, and even freedom, resoluteness, and faith. The fundamental dogma of Occidental ethics draws a parallel between virtue and the voice of conscience: the highest authority for a ‘man of virtue’ is his inner voice that makes him disregard public opinion or self-interest and primarily seek the benefit of the whole world. This again brings to mind the example of Katharine Gun, mentioned above, as well as all the martyrs of translation and interpreting, such as the Bible translator William Tyndale, who lost his life at the stake. Taking notice of the voice of conscience then implies closing oneself off from the world. According to the Occidental dogma, those who hear the call of conscience are few and far between; the majority obey the rules and norms mechanically, and when they transgress them, they do so out of recklessness (Ojakangas, 2013, 3, 8, 228–229).

Not all inner voices, even those attributed to conscience, are altruistic in nature and lead to good actions. Even some enemies of humanity, such as national socialist thinkers, seem to have genuinely believed that the notions of conscience and inner truth constituted the basis of their ideology (perhaps surprisingly, even Hitler mentions conscience several times in *Mein Kampf*). For Ojakangas (2013, 28; see also Haffner, 2002, 286–287), the paradox between the idea of the voice of conscience and Nazi ideology might be explained by the fact that the young adherents of National Socialism were molded into an unthinking and irresponsible mass entity. Conditions where



adherents of certain ideologies are molded into an unreflecting mass and where there is no room for the personal, individual voice of conscience might explain why communities of translators and interpreters have at some points of history behaved immorally. Post-colonial studies on translation have pointed out sinister cases of translation history where translation and interpreting were systematically used as a means of colonization (see, e.g., Cheyfitz 1991, Niranjana 1992, to mention just a few).

The voice of conscience can thus lead to actions that benefit the whole world or, in some conditions, its false appearances can lure individuals and masses to crimes against humanity, other living beings, and cultural heritage. In the end, ethics is essentially an affair of distinguishing righteous voices from evil ones, whether emanating from collective or individual sources. The idea of a constant battle between beneficial and malign forces over the human soul is very old and perceptible in the visual arts. For instance, in medieval depictions of the patron saint of Paris, Saint Genevieve, we can see an angel and the devil fighting in the background (Ross 1996, 101). In contemporary comics and cartoons the figures of the 'shoulder angel' and 'shoulder devil' (Kowalski 2012, 68), which appear near a character's ears in an ethical dilemma, represent the voices of conscience and temptation, respectively. The shoulder angel urges the character to 'do the right thing',<sup>9</sup> while the shoulder devil suggests a more egotistical course of action. Here, the shoulder angel and devil are personifications of the inner voices that influence decision-making.

### 3. From the voice of conscience to psychological voices

In the definition of text given at the beginning of this article, one of the defining characteristics was that texts have a material existence in some perceivable form. Since voice is a cluster of textual features, voices must also assume a perceptible form. How does this suit the notion of inner voices? Do they have a material existence? As Dolar (2006, 83) asks regarding the voice of conscience: "Is it the voice that one actually hears, or is the internal voice still a voice, or is a voice that has no empirical manifestation perhaps the voice in the proper sense, closer to the voice than the sounds one can physically hear?" According to empirical research on psychology, voices may actually appear as quasi-perceptual experiences within a human consciousness. In fact, these inner voices, or "imagined speech production", materialize to a certain extent. According to Tian and Poeppel (2012, 1), neuroimaging studies have shown that mental imagery and the corresponding perceptual processes, such as those in the visual, auditory, somatosensory, and olfactory domains, are mediated by common neural substrates. Furthermore, the tangibility and force of normally functioning inner speech have been shown in research, which demonstrates that the imagined voice has the

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<sup>9</sup> The same goes for derivatives of the shoulder angel, such as Jiminy Cricket in Disney's version of *Pinocchio*. Many thanks to Hanne Jansen for the reference to Jiminy Cricket, which led me to the idea of the shoulder angel and devil as personifications of moral and immoral voices.



power to attenuate the perception of co-occurring, identical external sounds. This is normally a technique the brain uses to help the self distinguish between the external sounds of one's own voice and those of others, but experiments have shown that inner imaginings can also attenuate co-occurring, identical sounds spoken by others (Scott, 2013).

Inner voices have been amply discussed and analyzed in the field of psychology and related disciplines. Since Freud, psychologists have, similarly to philosophers and theologians, claimed that our inner voice, the one that helps us stay on the straight and narrow, is intimately related to outer voices. In psychoanalytic terms, the voice of the 'superego' (Freud) is the voice of a psychic structure that "is the depository of parental injunctions and prohibitions" which causes inner guilt in case of transgressions (Akhtar, 2009, 285, 835). This voice represents an internalization of the rules of society or of professional norms, such as those formulated by collective translational voices, which were mentioned above. More recent psychological research also stresses the social, yet autonomous, nature of inner voices, relating them to self-regulation, on the one hand, and to pathological cases – schizophrenia, hallucinations – on the other (illnesses that in ancient times were seen as the workings of the devil).

In his book *The Voices Within*, Fernyhough (2017, 99–101) presents a so-called Dialogic Thinking model, which takes as its point of departure that children, as they grow, internalize conversations with others, thus forming the basis for their own inner dialogues with themselves. According to Fernyhough, our internalization of dialogues with others "means that the thinking we do in words will share some of the features of the conversations we have with others, which are in turn shaped by the interactional styles and social norms of our culture" (Fernyhough, 2017, 14–15). Furthermore, this thinking "guides our actions" (Fernyhough, 2017, 18). Consequently, "the voices within" have very similar functions as the voice of conscience as described above.

The difference between healthy and pathological voice-hearing, according to Fernyhough (2017, 96–97, 239–240), is that in the case of the former, the "voices in the head", despite the fact that they often contain or are influenced by others' perspectives and points of view, are perceived as coming from oneself, while in the case of the latter, the voices are perceived as belonging to someone else and not recognized as coming from oneself. In fact, there may seem to be reason to believe that the pathological cases are due to some kind of malfunction of this inner speech, one that causes a wrong attribution of voices (see also Tian & Poeppel, 2012, 6–7).

The reality of mental voices in those who are healthy as well as those who are ill has been confirmed by neurological research, which shows that the brain has the capacity to produce a mental copy of external speech, either as the given individual is actually speaking, or if he or she is not (Scott, 2013). Other studies have shown that it is possible to lose inner speech without losing other parts of consciousness or other, non-verbal forms of thinking. This can happen, for example, as a result of left-hemisphere hemorrhage (Tononi et al. 2016, 409). Consequently, voice does not seem to be the very foundation of human consciousness, but it is nevertheless an essential part of it.





#### 4. Concluding remarks

The purpose of this article was to contribute to research on voice in translation in two ways. On the one hand, my aim was to clarify the notions of voice and text, which have not yet been defined explicitly enough within this discipline. On the other hand, I wanted to open new avenues for research on voice in translation and interpreting by putting forward the notions of the 'voice of conscience' and 'inner voices'. The voice of conscience has explanatory power in investigating ethical aspects of translating and interpreting, especially in cases where social rules and professional norms are at odds with the outcome of a translation or interpreting event. It is also a useful concept in translator and interpreter training. Inner voices and the way they are interconnected with outer voices help explaining the way norms of translation are interiorized. The notion of inner voices might also be useful in empirical studies on interpreting, since they might be a factor that affects the interpreter's concentration in some circumstances. The idea of the interconnectedness of inner and outer voices may also help analyzing phenomena where translators and interpreters become uneasy or even traumatized by textual voices they have to mediate through their own voice, for instance in cases where they have to use the first person pronoun when interpreting in court testimonies of victims who have experienced extreme violence (see Hermans 2007; Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet 2013, 6–7).

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## The author

*Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov*, Professor, School of Languages and Translation Studies, PhD, University of Turku, Finland.

E-mail: kristiina.taivalkoski-shilov@utu.fi

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## ТЕКСТОВЫЕ, МОРАЛЬНЫЕ И ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ГОЛОСА ПЕРЕВОДА

К. Тайвалкоски-Шилов<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Школа языков и перевода, Университет Турку  
20014, Финляндия, Турку, Коскеннименкату, 4

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В последние десятилетия концепция голоса привлекла внимание многих ученых, специализирующихся в области исследований перевода, в особенности литературного. Понятие 'голос' обычно используется для анализа стилистических или структурных характеристик текстов перевода, интертекстуальности и других форм мультивокальности, а также вопросов этики, касающихся свободы воли, идеологии и власти. Первая часть данной статьи характеризует два основных концепта теории голоса в переводоведении (голос и текст) и современное состояние исследований в данной области. Вторая часть статьи представляет собой более глубокое осмысление понятия 'голос' в переводческих исследованиях в контексте соотношенных понятий «голос совести» в философии и политологии и «внутренний голос» в психологии.

**Ключевые слова:** перевод, устный перевод, голос, текст, этика, голос совести, внутренний голос.

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### Об авторе

*Кристина Тайвалкоски-Шилов*, профессор, Школа языков и перевода, Университет Турку, Финляндия.

E-mail: [kristiina.taivalkoski-shilov@utu.fi](mailto:kristiina.taivalkoski-shilov@utu.fi)

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