Adherence to the Code of Ethics in the Profession of Interpreting

Saleh M. Al-Salman*

ABSTRACT

A code of professional ethics defines and lays the principles of professional practice. In the profession of interpreting these principles include—among other things—confidentiality, integrity, and professionalism, which all members of the profession shall bound to observe, exercise, and respect. Since interpreting services have taken a giant leap, signaling an unprecedented demand due to the intricate nature of international relations, global business, and world events, it is of paramount importance for interpreters to maintain the highest professional standards in compliance with their code of ethics. This paper puts in a nutshell the findings of an empirical study which targeted 20 interpreters as to the degree of their commitment and adherence to the professional code of ethics. The results lend support to the research hypotheses stipulating that interpreters fall short of demonstrating full compliance with the prescribed code of ethics. Consequently, the situation calls for: (a) making interpreters well aware of the professional code of ethics, and (b) strictly enforcing and adhering to all such rules of professional practice.

Key words: Adherence, Code of Ethics, Interpreting, Confidentiality, Accuracy, Accountability, Competence, Objectivity/Impartiality, Reliability, Accreditation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern world with its technological arsenal has brought about a remarkable blend of business, political, and social interactions, which in turn have raised many new questions of ethical acceptability. As such, concern over the ethical behavior of businessmen and associates of different professions has been heightened and has led to the creation of highly specialized ethics centers in an effort to curb any malpractices. Such centers have endeavored to foster “a conscious effort to develop interdisciplinary scholarship in practical ethics” (appe@indiana.edu/Association for Practical and Professional Ethics).

In defining the code of ethics, the present study has drawn on a variety of sources, only two of which have been cited. The first definition has been adopted by the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA) and stipulates that a code of ethics “defines the principles of professional practice for all members of the profession” (http://www.aslia.au). The second is given by Shaw (1999:2) stating that “professional codes of ethics are rules that are supposed to govern conduct of members of a given profession” (cf. Shaw and Barry, 2004, Desjardins, 2003, Megone and Robinson, 2002, Boatright, 2000, Callahan, 1988, Patterson, 1982, Fried, 1981).

In formulating the matrix which served as the frame of reference for the principles and canons of ethical behavior and which in turn served as the set of dependent variables adopted in this study, the author consulted and checked a host of relevant internet sites from which the matrix has been derived (cf. Appendix D). Likewise, the theoretical background on which the coding matrix has been based draws on work done by Shaw and Berry (2004), Megone and Robinson (2002), together with the internet sites outlined in Appendix D).

Despite the diversity of the sources being consulted (cf. Appendix D), it was noticed that all of them strive to achieve three goals, namely organizing the profession, providing superior customer services, and protecting the interpreter. Although there have been instances of lexical variance in the labeling of the different categories of the code, the values underlying the code of ethics and the

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principles of ethical behavior were largely homogeneous and basically the same. In the present study, distinctions between general and special provisions, major categories and subcategories were reduced to the following six major values, which will serve hereafter as six dependent variables:

1. Confidentiality
2. Accuracy and Accountability
3. Competence
4. Objectivity and Impartiality
5. Reliability
6. Employment and Work Conditions

2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

2.1. Scope

Ethical codes of conduct have witnessed a considerable increase in the last two decades. Most professions have developed their own canons of ethical practice in order to protect those who are part of the business transactions, be it clients, workers, or employers.

Institutionalizing moral standards, ethical practices, and codes of ethics has become extremely important, especially in a competitive global society where the need to approach professional services with respect and cultural sensitivity is so dire (cf. Association of the Visual Language Interpreters of Canada: AVLIC). And as the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics put it, “We need a conscious effort to develop interdisciplinary scholarship in practical ethics” (http://www.appe@indiana.edu).

2.2. Limitations and Purpose

Acknowledging then the great concern and ongoing quest for developing, reviewing, and adhering to the professional codes of ethics, the present study takes up the same trend in an effort to make some contribution to the state of the art (cf. ASLIA www.aslia.com).

The purpose of the study is therefore to examine the degree to which interpreters show adherence to the values underlying their code of ethics and the guidelines of professional conduct.

3. DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

In the present study, adherence to the code of ethics by interpreters was checked against the six dependent variables identified above, which served as benchmarks of professional conduct for interpreters:

3.1. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is here defined as non-disclosure of information acquired in the interpreting of assignments, and as not taking personal advantage from confidential information gained in the course of professional service. In addition, an interpreter is not allowed to share information or subcontract it under any circumstances. Even in the case of educating interpreter trainees, all information which is likely to reveal clients’ names, age, address, must be withheld and considered strictly confidential (cf. Professional Code for Court Interpreters http//:www.iit.edu, CCHCP-Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics http://www.xculture.org, AVLIC http://www.avlic.ca, AIIC http://www.aiic.net).

3.2. Accuracy/Accountability

An interpreter is committed and shall accept responsibility for the accurate and faithful rendering of the SL speech into the TL. This requires an accurate transfer of the content of message, purpose, tone, style, spirit, in a manner which assures using a language that is easily understood by the party being served. This entails providing complete service by conveying all aspects of the original message and everything that is said without distortion by adding, omitting, condensing or changing anything. Consequently, an interpreter shall be held accountable to accept full responsibility for any decisions or actions taken in the process of providing quality professional service (cf. ASLIA www.aslia.com. CCHCP-Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics http://www.xculture.org, AIIC http://www.aiic.net).

3.3. Competence

Professional competence refers to the highest possible quality of service rendered. This quality is normally
linked to and determined by the translator’s qualifications and accreditation. Consequently, interpreters should decline rendering interpreting services for which they lack technical knowledge and skill that will hinder them from providing accurate interpretation throughout their practice. In this case “interpreters should accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and clients involved” (http://aslia.com.au).

3.4. Objectivity/ Impartiality

In this context, “an interpreter shall not allow personal bias nor favor, for... any client to whom interpreting services are being provided, to interfere with their ability to interpret accurately” (www.aslia.com.au). In order to achieve this, an interpreter shall reflect accuracy and faithfulness to the content of the message without adding or omitting information and by being neutral, fully detached, not taking sides and avoiding any conflict of interests. In sum, interpreters shall not counsel, advise, or inject personal opinions (www.aslia.com.au). According to the SDNY Code of Professional Responsibility, “Court interpreters, whether staff or freelance, serve the interest of the court. Their only function is to interpret accurately and faithfully, and with complete impartiality” (http://sdnyinterpreters.org).

3.5. Reliability

As a rule, interpreters are required to always maintain high professional values. As members of professional associations, interpreters shall be reliable by demonstrating strict adherence to punctuality, appointments and deadlines. An interpreter should be conscientious and reflect the highest standards of commitment and responsibility with regard to assignments they have accepted and with their dealings with colleagues (cf. CCHCP-Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics http://www.xculture.org).

3.6. Employment/ Work Conditions

According to the Association of the Visual Language Interpreters of Canada: AVLIC Code of Ethics, “Interpreters are required to show integrity in professional relationships by dealing honestly and fairly with consumers and colleagues.” Likewise, they should maintain integrity in business practices by acting honestly and ethically (www.avlic.ca). Such values relate to requesting compensation for services rendered and maintaining professional relationships with colleagues at work. In other words, interpreters “will refrain from any unfair competition with colleagues, engage in comparative advertising or willfully undercutting.” Similarly, interpreters “will refrain from making inaccurate statements regarding their competence, education, experience or certification” (www.avlic.ca). Furthermore, interpreters must seek an ongoing process of professional development by extending their linguistic, cultural or general knowledge and competence (cf. ASLIA www.aslia.com, CCHCP-Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics http://www.xculture.org, AIIC http://www.aiic.net).

4. HYPOTHESES

The present piece of research investigated the hypotheses that the extent to which interpreters show better adherence to the professional code of ethics is a function of the following independent variables:

4.1. Accreditation

Interpreters who are recognized by an internationally recognized professional organization are more adept at enforcing the professional code of ethics than their unaccredited counterparts. Among those organizations are American Translators Association (ATA), Canadian Translators Association (CTA), Australian Association of Certified Court Interpreters (ACCI), National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), Australia, Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC).

4.2. Professional experience:

The longer the interpreter’s professional experience, the higher the degree of commitment and adherence to the prescribed code.

4.3. Code awareness

Interpreters who are well aware of the professional code of ethics show more adherence and commitment to the prescribed code than their peers who lack this basic knowledge in career orientation and development.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Respondents

The sample of the study comprised 20 professional interpreters who were grouped according to three
independent variables: (a) accreditation, (b) experience, and (c) code awareness. The process of selecting the interpreters was originally planned to elicit responses of 100 interpreters who were initially contacted through electronic mail. The plan was designed on the assumption that the greatest majority of the interpreters approached will answer back so that equal numbers of respondents representing each of the three independent variables described in 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 above and their subdivisions can be maintained so that ideal descriptive analysis can be conducted. But due to the low rate of actual incoming responses, 20 in all, the author had to deal with the situation as is, which ended up with representations of unequal numbers as far as the three independent variables are concerned.

5.2. Instruments

The corpus of data needed for this study has been collected through three instruments:

5.2.1. Questionnaire

5.2.2. Tape scripts

5.2.3. Protocol interviews

Below, for each of the three instruments in turn, I discuss: (1) the procedure for data collection, (2) the coding of the data, and (3) the results derived from that instrument.

5.2.1. Questionnaire

5.2.1.1. Procedure

A twenty-item questionnaire was designed for the study. Responses to the questionnaire items carried three options for the respondent to choose from: A = always; S = sometimes, N = never (see Appendix A). The twenty items of the questionnaire were organized in six categories representing the six dependent variables of: (1) confidentiality, with 2 items), (2) accuracy/accountability, 5 items), (3) competence, 3 items), (4) objectivity/impartiality, 3 items), (5) reliability, 3 items), and (6) employment/work conditions, 4 items). The respondents were also asked to provide professional information as to the following three independent variables: (1) accreditation (accredited vs. unaccredited) (2) work experience (1-5 yrs., 6-10 yrs., or more than 10 years), and (3) code awareness, (aware or unaware). The idea is to study the interaction between the two sets of variables ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ in order to determine the degree of adherence to the code of ethics.

5.2.1.2. Coding of the Data

In order to conduct statistical analysis, the response options for the questionnaire were coded with a number value: Always = 1; Sometimes = 2 and Never = 3. The key to the model answers of the questionnaire has chosen ‘Always’ as the correct response option. Based on this coding system applied in the qualitative analysis, the frequencies and percentages of correct responses in all six dependent variables were calculated and rank ordered accordingly on a scale of 1-6 (see Appendix B).

5.2.1.3. Results

Table (1) and Figure (1) below show that, on the questionnaire, the mean results of correct responses by all participants showed that for the independent variable ‘accreditation,’ the average correct responses scored by the accredited group was 16.5 out of 20, making 83.5%, against 12.6 out of 20, with 63%, for the unaccredited group. For the three-group independent variable ‘experience,’ the results came at 16.7, 16.5, and 11 out of 20, accounting for 83.5%, 82.5% and 55%, respectively for each of the three groups representing the first and most experienced group (11 + years), the second and less experienced group (6-10), and the third and least experienced group (1-5). The third independent variable ‘code awareness’ showed 16.7 and 83.7% for respondents aware of the code of ethics for interpreters, against 12.6 and 63% for respondents unaware of the code.

| Table 1. Means and percentages of participants per independent variables |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Independent Variables    | Accreditation    | Experience/yrs. | Code Awareness   |
|                          | Acc. | Unaccredited | 11+  | 6-10 | 5-6 | Aware | Unaware |
| Mean results out of 20   | 16.57 | 12.6    | 16.7 | 16.5 | 11  | 16.7  | 12.6    |
| %                       | 83.5  | 63      | 83.5 | 82.5 | 55  | 83.5  | 63      |
The data retrieved through the questionnaire were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The following analyses were conducted for the three independent variables of ‘accreditation,’ ‘experience,’ and ‘code awareness.’ A T-test was conducted for the independent variable ‘accreditation’ which showed significance between the sample groups (accredited and unaccredited) in their responses to the dependent variables of the questionnaire (T (18) = -2.227, p ≤ .05). A one-way ANOVA was applied to the second independent variable, ‘experience.’ The analysis showed significance (F (2,19) = 3.628, p ≤ .05), and a post-hoc test was conducted using Tukey’s HSD Analysis. This analysis indicated a significant difference between the group with more than 10 years of experience and the group with 1-5 years of experience (p ≤ .05).

No significance was found for the independent variable of ‘code awareness’ between those who were aware of the code of ethics and those who were not.

5.2.1.3.1. Independent-dependent Variable Interaction

Post hoc tests using Tukey’s HSD analysis were also conducted to investigate the interaction between the independent and dependent variables of ‘confidentiality, accuracy, accountability, competence, objectivity/impartiality, reliability, and employment/work conditions.’ The results showed that two of the independent variables, namely ‘accreditation’ and ‘experience,’ showed significant interaction with certain dependent variables (p ≤ .05).

For the independent variable of ‘accreditation,’ the dependent variable of ‘confidentiality’ showed significance between its two groups of ‘accredited’ and ‘unaccredited’ (p ≤ .05).

For the independent variable of ‘experience,’ the following dependent variables showed significance between the 1-5 year group and the 11+ group: ‘competence,’ ‘accountability,’ and ‘work conditions/employment.’ Furthermore, the last dependent variable, ‘work conditions/employment,’ also showed significance between the 6-10 year group and the 11+ year group (p ≤ .05) Tables (2.a) and (2.b) below show the mean results for the interaction between the independent and dependent variables described above reflecting a significant interaction of highest means for the ‘accredited’ and ‘experienced’ groups.

| Table 2.a. Mean for interaction between ‘confidentiality’ and ‘accreditation’ |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Confidentiality   | Correct responses | No. of respondents | Mean              |
| Accredited        | 18                | 9                  | 2                 |
| Unaccredited      | 19                | 11                 | 1.7               |
Table 2.b. Mean for interaction between ‘experience’ and ‘competence,’ ‘accuracy,’ and employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Correct responses</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence 11+</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy    11+</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment  11+</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the Tables (2.a) and (2.b) have shown, the highest means were recorded by the ‘accredited’ and the ‘most experienced’ groups of respondents.

5.2.2. Tape and video recordings

5.2.2.1. Procedure

The respondents were solicited for samples of their interpretation work. They each provided either a tape recording or video footage of authentic interpreting sessions, including both the source text and the respondents’ interpretation. The data collected sampled the two modes of interpreting -- consecutive and simultaneous --to assess the actual performance of the interpreters in relation to the three independent variables identified in section 4 above. The rationale behind applying such a method is to verify some of the results obtained from the quantitative analysis described above which did not always yield statistically significant differences between categories within the same variable (e.g. code awareness). As indicated earlier, this could be attributed to the relatively small number of the sample used in the study. In this case, verification and cross-checking of available data through a different method of analysis could lead to more reliable results.

5.2.2.2. Coding of the Data

The data were validated by the author through a careful analysis of the audio/video recordings of the relevant interpreting tasks performed by each of the twenty interpreters. For analysis, the respondents’ recordings were organized by the three independent variables discussed above: their years of experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11+ years); their awareness of the code (aware and unaware); and their accreditation (accredited and unaccredited).

The evaluation process of the interpreted material followed a set of benchmarks and assessment criteria:

5.2.2.2.1. Interpreter’s linguistic competence: based on providing accurate morpho-syntactic structures and oral fluency

5.2.2.2.2. Semantic equivalence: based on providing appropriate lexical choices which render accurate TL meaning.

5.2.2.2.3. Faithfulness in rendering TL equivalents without changing the SL meaning through deletion, addition, or substitution.

5.2.2.2.4. Coping with the speaker without message distortion or meaning loss (cf. Al-Salman, forthcoming).

The six dependent variables were then rank-listed from 1-6 on the basis of higher percentage of correct responses or better performance (see Appendix B).

5.2.2.3. Results

The results demonstrated that the overall performance of the interpreters was far from perfect, yet it was altogether satisfactory, with individual differences being detected. The results were to a great extent consistent with those obtained from the questionnaire in that the two categories of dependent variables, namely accuracy and competence were associated mainly with the independent variables of ‘accreditation,’ ‘experience,’ and ‘code awareness.’ The more experienced interpreters, with 11+ years, showed a sophisticated level of performance marked with fluency, and accuracy, while the less experienced group, with 1-5 years, reflected some noticeable flaws in rendering the appropriate lexical choices and semantic equivalents. It was noticed that the problems were largely attributed to lack of coping with the speaker, which resulted in some omissions, distortions, and inaccuracies.
Such flaws were more dominant among the unaccredited, the less experienced, and the code-unaware group. This particular group of interpreters may be characterized as slow, hesitant, and not keen about correcting themselves in the case of mistakes. According to the coding system described in 5.2.1.2 above, the two dependent variables of ‘accuracy’ and ‘competence’ were ranked 5 and 4 out of 6, respectively.

3. Protocol Interviews

1. Procedure
   The protocol interviews of face-to-face, video conference, or internet chatting, were conducted with some subjects and on a small scale, especially when the need arose to clarify and verify some discrepancies in the results of the two data-collection instruments described in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 above.

   Two categories of subjects were interviewed: (1) those whose total scores were relatively low when their record showed that they were ‘accredited,’ with ‘more than 10 years of experience,’ and ‘aware of the code of ethics,’ and (2) those whose total scores were high but did not reflect perfect matching with the prescribed top-level independent variable qualifications (i.e. with long experience, accredited, and code aware).

2. Coding of the Data
   Discrepancies in the responses of the subjects were validated by requesting the target subject(s) to:
   - Accept or reject the fact that there are discrepancies between their responses to some items of the questionnaire and their performance in the tape/video recordings.
   - Give a justification as to why such inconsistencies have occurred.

3. Results of Protocol Interviews
   The protocol interviews confirmed the existence of a discrepancy in the responses of the two categories of subjects interviewed. The discrepancy may be attributed to personal reasons rather than technical ones. It is the interpreters’ personal interests that seemed to dominate the scene in some cases, regardless of whether or not they conform to the prescribed code of professional ethics. A case in point is the tendency of four of the subjects to measure success and achievement in terms of personal interests and gains. For example, two interpreters who were identified as ‘accredited,’ ‘highly experienced,’ and ‘code aware’ did not show strict adherence to the code, with their total correct questionnaire responses recorded at 13 and 14 out of 20. On the other hand, another two subjects who were identified as ‘unaccredited,’ with one of them having minimum experience (1-5 years), and lacking code awareness scored 20 and 18 correct responses out of 20. It turned out that for those interpreters, accepting an interpreting assignment is not necessarily determined by qualifications and subject-area specialization but by experience in interpreting, which they have. Likewise, they believe that an interpreting charge is neither fixed nor determined by qualifications. Therefore, their responses to the questionnaire items were given accordingly.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results obtained from this piece of research raise a number of issues and bring a host of relevant matters into the interpreting scene. At the outset, the three-point set of research hypotheses expressed in (4.1, 4.2, 4.3) above have been validated. The results announced that adherence to the code of ethics by interpreters is generally lacking and far from perfect. The results came also to establish that adherence to the code of ethics by interpreters or lack of it is a product of a correlative relationship between the three independent variables of ‘accreditation,’ ‘professional experience,’ and ‘code awareness’ in conjunction with the six dependent variables of ‘confidentiality,’ ‘accuracy,’ ‘competence,’ ‘objectivity,’ ‘reliability,’ and ‘work conditions’.

6.1. Quantitative Analysis
   A careful review of the results obtained from the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, together with the qualitative analysis of the questionnaire data and the review of the tape/video recordings revealed some significant differences and important observations.

   The results of section 5 above (refer to Table 1 and Figure 1) present a significant difference between the accredited and unaccredited groups. Obviously, accreditation proved to have considerable impact on the performance of the sample interpreters, which renders the first hypothesis of the current study (4.1) as valid in assessing the interpreter’s performance in general and in judging his/her adherence to the professional code of interpreting in particular. This variable showed significant interaction with the dependent variable
‘confidentiality.’ For the independent variable ‘experience,’ especially between the 1-5 years and 11+ groups, it showed a significant interaction with the dependent variables of ‘competence,’ ‘accuracy,’ and ‘employment.’ The values rendered: .039 from the T-Test and .049 from ANOVA are in full compliance with the significant mean difference at the .05 level. Consequently, the first and second hypotheses of the study (4.1 and 4.2) which predict a significant interaction between the independent variables of ‘accreditation’ and ‘experience’ and the dependent variables identified in section 5.2.1.3.1 above, have been confirmed and the null hypothesis which denies any significant interaction between the two sets of variable has therefore been rejected.

The fact that such a significant interaction exists between the independent variables of ‘accreditation’ and ‘experience’ and the dependent variables of ‘confidentiality,’ ‘competence,’ ‘accuracy,’ and ‘employment,’ does not necessarily suggest that the opposite does not hold. A case in point is the example of the two ‘unaccredited’ interpreters whose scores reflected better overall performance (20/20 and 18/20) than another two ‘accredited’ interpreters who scored only (13/20 and 14/20). But, as indicated earlier, the protocol interviews were helpful in explaining these discrepancies, attributing them to ‘personal’ interpretation of the code of ethics by the interpreters concerned and not to the established canons and values governing the code itself.

In retrospect, while literature on the subject acknowledges the importance of accreditation, allowances are being made for caution. For example, the NAJIT site (www.najit.org) stresses that “reliable accreditation is one of the most important issues of the day.” But at the same time it purports that “the purpose of certification exams is to test practical interpreting ability to determine if it meets a certain minimum standard ... and that Federal certification is usually a good indicator of competence, but State certification may or may not be a reliable indicator... and the only languages for which there is Federal court certification are Haitian Creole, Navajo and Spanish” (P. 3 of 6). Therefore, for accreditation to be effective, it should be reliable, since the end goal of accreditation is for all members to comply with the terms of the prescribed code. If this condition is not met, then the practical interpreting output of the interpreter will be at stake.

The second independent variable, ‘work experience,’ proved to be unquestionably relevant in determining an interpreter’s performance as far as adherence to the code of ethics is concerned. The results confirmed that the second item of the hypotheses “work experience” (4.2) is sound as it reflected statistically significant differences between the responses of the subjects based on their placement in the three experience-based groups of: more than 10 years, and 1-5 years. It follows from this that adherence to the code of ethics, which is the sum of demonstrating and maintaining confidentiality, accuracy, competence, objectivity, impartiality, reliability, and compliance with the standards of employment and work conditions is being observed in varying degrees according to the interpreter’s professional experience.

As for the interaction between the independent variable ‘work experience’ and the set of dependent variables specified above, the results have been conducive to a significant interaction between the two. The relationship between ‘work experience’ and ‘accountability’ was detected at a mean difference of .008, which is statistically significant at the .05 level (cf. Table 2.b). Similarly, a significant interaction was detected between ‘experience’ and ‘competence,’ with a significant difference of .036 at the .05 level (cf. Table 2.b). Likewise, Table 2.b shows a significant statistical difference which leads to a significant interaction between ‘work experience’ as an independent variable and “employment/work conditions” as a dependent variable. Obviously, ‘work experience’ is a key factor which enables the interpreter to gain more knowledge, sophistication, and expertise through which he considers himself to be held accountable for any breaches of the professional code of ethics for interpreters.

The question of professional experience was equally highlighted and reinforced through the results obtained from the qualitative analysis component applied by the researcher. In this mode of analysis which was based on frequencies and percentages, the results showed that in all six categories of dependent variables the highest scores of correct responses obtained from the questionnaire data were achieved by respondents belonging to the most experienced group, of 11+ years.

The implications of the previous findings call upon interpreters to upgrade their qualifications by securing accreditation from an internationally recognized agency. Similarly, an interpreter’s professional experience is a key factor in improving his/her understanding and adequate handling of the questions of accuracy, competence, and employment as principal values in
determining the interpreter’s degree of adherence to the code of ethics.

6.2. Qualitative Analysis

The results obtained from this mode of analysis do not contradict with those obtained from the questionnaire but rather supplement them through finding common ground in terms of regularities or irregularities which run through the data. Qualitative analysis may reveal additional details to those provided by the quantitative analysis since quantitative analysis requires larger samples in order for the results to be significant and therefore can be generalized. Consequently, the qualitative component of the analysis incorporated here is meant to enhance the quantitative ANOVA and T-Test results through some more probing into the relationships between the two sets of variables under investigation.

The protocol interviews revealed some cases of noncompliance by some interpreters. A case in point is that of the two interpreters who were accredited but who still fell short of demonstrating adherence to the code. These two respondents happened to score 13 and 14 correct responses out of 20 when their record showed ‘accredited,’ ‘experienced,’ and ‘code aware.’ Moreover, the results of the qualitative analysis based on reviewing their tape scripts were positive. The protocols showed that the two subjects did acknowledge the possibility of detecting a discrepancy in their performance in the two instruments (i.e., the questionnaire and the authentic interpreting sessions). Their justification was based on the argument that they do not always agree with all the specific details of the professional code of ethics especially when it comes to matters pertaining to ‘self,’ such as employment, work conditions, or conflict of interests. Issues pertaining to payments, fees, and accepting assignments according to qualifications, which have an impact on an interpreter’s objectivity, reliability and employment were not fully adhered to by those two interpreters.

Again, we need to make the point that not any accreditation but only reliable accreditation could have curbed such a discrepancy. The breaches centered on how some interpreters charge fees which are incommensurate with their qualifications, experience or nature of the assignment. Others may accept an assignment which requires a language different from the one for which they have been accredited, or an assignment which is beyond their technical knowledge and immediate field of specialization. Consequently, accreditation is a double-edged weapon which should be checked, scrutinized and handled quite professionally and taken seriously by interpreters and employers alike. And as NAJIT code states, “If you are hiring a translator or interpreter who claims to be certified, ask her/him ‘certified as what and by whom?’” (www.najit.org).

Two other respondents happened to score 20 and 18 out of 20, when their record showed less than perfect qualifications on the independent variables scale. The first respondent was experienced (11+), code aware, but unaccredited. The second was also unaccredited, with 6-10 years of experience, and unaware of the code. The two cases did very well on the qualitative analysis review of tape scripts. When asked for justification, the first respondent who was unaccredited attributed this to the fact that in the place where he works, he has never been asked to submit credentials or proof of accreditation as a requirement for employment. Instead, he was subjected to pre-employment interpreting tests in the two modes of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. The second respondent, with second-rate experience and no accreditation, stated that he is so keen about the profession of interpreting and he tries to do things right regardless of anything. He has good academic qualifications and nine years of experience, but accreditation does not seem to matter for his employer as long as he handles his assignments adequately. It was only by virtue of protocol interviews that this kind of discrepancy in the research findings was sorted out.

It is worth noting here that the third independent variable ‘code awareness’ did not feature statistically significant results in the T-test, which renders the null hypothesis valid. Nevertheless, the qualitative analysis for the same variable showed differences between the two groups of the sample ‘code aware’ with 83.5% and ‘code unaware’ with 63%. But irrespective of the inconsistencies between the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis, there are differences in the results obtained from the ‘code aware’ group of respondents and the ‘code unaware’ one. Such differences may have proven significant had the size of the sample been larger.

The most distinguished performance was achieved by those who happened to combine the three ideal criteria of long professional experience, accreditation, and code awareness. This tripartite relationship proves that an interpreter’s cumulative experience is an asset in itself
but should still be enhanced by continued search for further knowledge through having accreditation/certification from an internationally-recognized agency/association, which requires full awareness and strict adherence whereby all members are bound to comply with the provisions of that code.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The broad outline derived from the research findings of the present study is consistent with the thesis that quality interpreting can be best maintained through full adherence to the ethical principals stipulated in the code of ethics. A viable code of ethics, as NAJIT conceives of is “intended not only to set forth fundamental ethical concepts for interpreters to follow, but also to encourage them to develop their own well-informed ethical judgment” (www.najit.org).

As the study has pointed out, adherence to the professional code of ethics is a key component in developing the profession of interpreting. Complete adherence is the by-product of three integrated variables. First, an interpreter’s relevant academic qualifications should provide him with the mechanisms needed to maintain and improve his skills and knowledge which are key elements to demonstrating accuracy and competence. Second, the constant search for professional development through acquiring additional credentials pertaining to quality assurance and maintaining the highest standards is realized through certification and accreditation. Once this is achieved, an interpreter will be equipped with the necessary tools to master aspects of confidentiality, impartiality, reliability, and employment-related matters. Third, an interpreter’s extended experience which will be based on sound academic and cultural background, together with proper professional development gained through securing accreditation, and strict adherence to the code. If these qualifications are secured, then all impediments to compliance and adherence will be removed. Through this formula, not only will an interpreter's prospects for realizing personal goals of job advancement and better career opportunities considerably increase, but the profession of interpreting itself will develop with greater zest and momentum.

To conclude, the present study brought to light the need for interpreters to show full adherence to the code of ethics set for the profession. Moreover, it identified those aspects of interpreting which pose problems to interpreters. To this end, the study announces that additional research is still needed to explore the ways and means to develop the profession of interpreting and its code of ethics. This could be realized by conceiving of potential scenarios which are likely to impede the profession of interpreting to be given to the survey respondents in lieu of a questionnaire and putting up strategies for improvement. One way of doing it is to give the respondents ambiguous situations of some sort, perhaps printed stories or video scenarios, to react to and thereby reveal their ethical propensities instead of relying on their self reporting of the same.
Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Are you accredited by an official interpreting organization?  Yes □ No □

If “Yes”, please name the accrediting institution/agency:

- Years of experience:  1-5 □  6-10 □  more than 10 □

- Are you well aware of the professional code of ethics for interpreters?  Yes □ No □

Choose the most appropriate response:  A = always, S = sometimes, N = never

I. Confidentiality:

1. An interpreter must not council, advise, or interject personal opinions. A □ S □ N □

2. An interpreter shall not disclose information or take personal advantage from information acquired in the course of his/her work. A □ S □ N □

II. Accuracy / Accountability:

3. An interpreter must interpret everything that is said by all people in the interaction without omitting or adding information during an interpreting assignment. A □ S □ N □

4. The interpreter should continue to interpret everything accurately even if s/he disagrees with what is said and thinks it is a lie or even immoral. A □ S □ N □

5. The interpreter should utilize the same level of language used by the speaker so that s/he will interpret colloquial, slang, or crude language as well as sophisticated. A □ S □ N □
6. An interpreter knows that a word-for-word interpretation may not convey the intended meaning. A □ S □ N □

7. If the interpreter makes a mistake during interpretation, s/he should correct it. A □ S □ N □

III. Competence:

8. Interpreters must consider their linguistic ability, socio-cultural knowledge and experience when accepting interpreting assignments, and should decline any work if they believe it to be beyond their technical linguistic competence. A □ S □ N □

9. Interpreters shall only accept employment for which they possess the proper certification according to a standardized evaluation. A □ S □ N □

10. Interpreters must render the message faithfully by conveying the content, tone, register, and spirit of what is said. A □ S □ N □

IV. Objectivity / Impartiality:

11. An interpreter should control overt expressions of opinion, such as surprise, sympathy, or disgust while interpreting for defendants or witnesses. A □ S □ N □

12. During pauses in testimony, such as side-bar conferences or recesses, the interpreter should not converse with the witness. A □ S □ N □

13. The interpreter must candidly convey all conflicts of personal interest. A □ S □ N □
V. Reliability:

14. An interpreter must refrain from obtaining assignments by undercutting standard fees or costs. A □ S □ N □

15. Interpreters must withdraw immediately from encounters that they perceive to be in violation of the code of ethics. A □ S □ N □

16. An interpreter must be punctual and adhere to appointment times and deadlines. A □ S □ N □

VI. Employment / Work Conditions:

17. When working in teams, interpreters are required to remain attentive all the time to provide any information that may be required by colleagues, e.g. linguistic, semantic, contextual. A □ S □ N □

18. Interpreters must seek to extend their linguistic, cultural, or general knowledge (i.e., on-going professional development). A □ S □ N □

19. Interpreters must require advance copies of working documents and texts to be interpreted at any assignment. A □ S □ N □

20. Interpreters charge an appropriate fee with regard to their accreditation level, relevant academic qualifications, skill level, years of experience, and the nature of the assignment. A □ S □ N □

Appendix B
Qualitative Analysis
Dependent Variables: frequencies & percentages of correct responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Total frequencies &amp; percentages (of correct responses)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
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<td>Accuracy/Accountability</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
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Appendix C

Qualitative Analysis: Summary of Questionnaire Responses

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<th>Correct Responses</th>
<th>Participant Experience (Years)</th>
<th>Correct Responses</th>
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Appendix D

Internet sources from which coding matrix was derived

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<td>International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), <a href="http://www.aiic.net">http://www.aiic.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Court Interpreter Ethics and Protocol (US District Court, New York, NY), <a href="http://www.sdnyinterpreters.org">http://www.sdnyinterpreters.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), <a href="http://www.avlic.ca">http://www.avlic.ca</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA), <a href="http://www.aslia.au">http://www.aslia.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Association of Certified Court Interpreters, <a href="http://www.dolmetscher.at">http://www.dolmetscher.at</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (RID’s Code of Ethics), <a href="http://www.rid.org">http://www.rid.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Cultural Health Program (CCHCP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Code for Court Interpreters, <a href="http://www.iit.edu">http://www.iit.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

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http://www.courts.statewi.us
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http://www.najit.org
http://www.rid.org
http://www.sdnyinterpreters.org
http://www.xculture.org

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