

# Translator Professionalism: Perspectives From Asian Clients

Christy Fung-ming Liu, The Education University of Hong Kong, Tai Po, Hong Kong

## ABSTRACT

In recent decades, Translation Studies scholars have highlighted the concept of translator professionalism as a multidimensional term related not only to practitioners' competency in the language domain, but also to their attitudes, behavior, and actions. This article empirically examines how translation clients in Asia perceive translator professionalism. The analysis is based on 72 clients in Asia. The findings suggest that clients perceive the translation occupation as vital to society but have divergent views on whether translation is a profession. They attach importance to translators' proactive behavior at work, such as their reliability. The clients have statistically different opinions on whether or not translators can share their work-related pictures and information in online communities. They also point out that the lack of a certification system affects the professional image of translators. This research allows translators, clients and scholars to have a more informed perception of translator professionalism perceived by Asian clients.

## KEYWORDS

Certification System, Empirical Method, Quantitative Method, Translation Clients in Asia, Translation Profession, Translator Professionalism, Translator Status

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been a huge revival of interest in using empirical methods or a sociological approach to understand translators in the workplace and society. However, translator professionalism, which is important as recently highlighted by the International Federation of Translators (2017), has been relatively under-examined in an empirical way in Asia. In view of this, a study, in which a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, was conducted in an attempt to empirically investigate how practitioners and clients in Asia perceive translator professionalism. The analysis of translators' perceptions will be reported on in detail in another publication, the present article is precisely to study how clients in Asia perceive translator professionalism.

As noted by Chesterman and Wagner, "'client' is a rather dangerous blanket term" (2014, p. 49). The present study adopts the viewpoints of Chesterman and Wagner (2014) to include three types of clients: (1) those who are authors. These may be clients who have written a text in their first language or in a foreign language and are having the text translated; (2) those who are middlemen between readers and authors. They may be working in translation agencies or are responsible for hiring translators in a company; (3) those who are readers. These clients need the translation because they do not understand the source language. In this study, comparisons will be made to analyze the different perspectives held by these three types of clients.

Traditionally, Translation Studies literature associated translator professionalism with a person's capacity to produce acceptable target texts (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). It may be due to the tendency

DOI: 10.4018/IJTIAL.2019070101

This article published as an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the author of the original work and original publication source are properly credited.

in the twentieth century that Translation Studies centered on studying texts. Pym notes that Nida's work and the whole thrust of Descriptive Translation Studies trace the social and cultural approaches to translation, but those works are "fundamentally ways of studying texts [...] texts were the thing" (Pym, 2006, p. 2). However, the past two decades have witnessed a change in Translation Studies wherein translation is increasingly viewed as a social practice (Kafi et al., 2018; Wolf, 2010). Therefore, recent discussion of translator professionalism is no longer confined to the language and translation competence of a translator to produce acceptable target texts. Rather, scholars use a macro perspective to also take factors such as social, ethical and behavioral into consideration. For example, Kościałkowska-Okońska defines translator professionalism as 'an explicit result of effective functioning of cognitive factors allowing text processing and production in order to convey the meaning in a given social and cultural context in a generally acceptable manner' (Kościałkowska-Okońska, 2012, p. 97). Likewise, Cragie, Higgins, Hervey and Gambarotta (2016) put emphasis on the standards of working and ethical behavior in translator professionalism, noting that "professionalism suggests acting in a manner befitting a member of a profession. More specifically, the term 'professionalism' indicates a set of values peculiar to that profession, which informs standards of working and ethical behavior" (Cragie et al., 2016, p. 178). The translator's ethical behavior is also stressed by Robinson when he (1997) implies that translator professionalism:

*...is "the best synonym for the translator's reliability," the translator's behavior should be "ethical professional," that is "meet[ing] users' expectations" and ranging from the ability to admit his/her ignorance to demonstrating his/her professional pride, integrity and self-esteem; professionalism means a high degree of internalization of the particular skills necessary for plying the trade of translation... (Robinson, 1997, quoted in Tyulenev, 2015)*

Kiraly (2014) gives more details describing professionalism:

*...would characterize the translator's ability to work within the social and ethical constraints of translation situations in a manner that is consistent with the norms of the profession. This would involve aspects like the commitment to meet deadlines and to inform a client in due time if a translation will be late... (Kiraly, 2014, p. 31)*

Kiraly further points out that conventional translator training has almost exclusively accentuated the transmission of translational expertise, and yet he calls on scholars and translation teachers to pay attention to students' need to be initiated into translation as a 'professional' enterprise. For example, having students undertake authentic translation work collaboratively in the classroom allows them to be confronted with problems concerning how to act in a professional manner.

Following the prevailing trend, this paper endeavors to define translator professionalism as a multi-faceted term which includes the dimensions of professional status, adherence to ethical practice principles, proactive behavior at work, behavior outside work, organizational context, and situational awareness. (Section 2 of this paper explains these dimensions in detail.)

In Translation Studies, one area that has not been adequately studied is the issue of how translators are perceived by their clients. In Europe, some efforts have been made to empirically study clients' viewpoints. For example, the Optimale Survey (2012) examined how clients determine current and emerging competence requirements within the European translation industry. Unfortunately, clients' voices are seldom heard in Asia. In view of this, the present empirical study was carried out to investigate the way clients perceive translator professionalism in the region.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This research addresses the following questions:

1. How do clients in Asia perceive translator professionalism?
2. Do clients in different Asian countries perceive translator professionalism in different ways?
3. Are the perceptions held by the three types of clients (those who are authors, middlemen and readers) different?

Clients' voices are essential because they play an important role during the translation process. Their role is stressed by Translation Studies scholars (Nord, 1997; Risku et al., 2016), and their satisfaction is crucial (Orlando, 2016). In fact, Prunč even noted that translators consider the client as king (Prunč, 2007). Unfortunately, in Translation Studies, little interest has been shown in client expectations of the work or tasks of the translator (Risku et al., 2016).

A number of the Translation Studies scholars stress that translator professionalism should not be limited to the person's capacity to simply produce acceptable target texts but should also cover the translator's behavior at and outside work (as noted by Cragie et al., 2016; Kiraly, 2014), the translator's adherence to ethical practice principles, and the translator's sense of professional identity and pride (as noted by Robinson, 1997). Given that no empirical tests to these categories of translator professionalism have been done systemically, a tool is needed for the present study to carry out an empirical investigation. This study adapts the professionalism construct developed by Carter et al. (2015; hereafter referred to as the paramedic professionalism construct). The project of Carter et al. was designed to explore what is perceived as professionalism by qualified paramedics and student paramedics. To achieve their objective, the researchers developed a construct to empirically examine professionalism. They identified six dimensions that professionalism should include: professional status, an internalized professional identity, attitudes, behavior, organizational context, and situational awareness.

The paramedic professionalism construct was adapted for the present study because the dimensions are also emphasized by the Translation Studies scholars discussed above. Although the two occupational groups do not resemble each other and there are important differences regarding the nature of the jobs, both groups have important similarities. First of all, it could be argued that paramedics are, to a certain extent, similar to translators because both are regarded as a semi-profession, but they want to be respected and recognized as a profession. (For an extensive literature review about the relatively low status of translation and the subservience of translators in society, see Bassnett, 2002; Dam & Zethsen, 2008; Katan, 2009; Pym, Grin, Sfreddo & Chan, 2013; Sela-Sheffy, 2006; Simeoni, 1998; Tyulenev, 2015. For the field of paramedics, see Williams, Onsmann & Brown, 2009; 2012, for a discussion about why paramedics are seen as a semi-profession.) However, practitioners in both fields regard their own work as highly appreciated (see for example Ruokonen & Mäkisalo 2018 for translators' perspectives and Gough 2018 for paramedics' opinions). There is no denying that the training, working conditions and employment patterns for paramedics are different from those of translators. Comparatively speaking, there is overall stricter training and more regulated gate-keeping in the paramedics' profession and jobs, quite unlike in translators' jobs. However, both occupational groups have seen monumental changes over recent decades to fledgling professionals aspiring to seek better recognition. For example, paramedics have been shifted since the 1970s from patient transport service to an increasingly professionalized practice (Givati, Markham & Street, 2018). People in the field have been making concerted efforts to enhance the status of the practitioners. For instance, at the time of conducting the present study (July 2016 to July 2018), paramedics in Australia were not registered as health care professionals. In other words, regulation of the profession in the country either did not exist or existed via a series of inconsistent frameworks. After a long journey by adopting a number of professionalization strategies (Gough, 2018), paramedics joined

the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in December 2018, signifying that paramedic has become a protected title in Australia. In the field of translation, scholars and practitioners have also been suggesting professionalization strategies and/or giving recommendations to improve the mechanisms by which the status of translators is signaled (see Pym et al., 2013, for a detailed report on the status of the translation profession in the European Union).

It must be noted that the construct was designed for the paramedic profession. Therefore, items have been modified to suit the objective and context of the present paper, which examines the field of translation and the perceptions of clients. Of the six key dimensions, internalized professional identity (i.e. feeling oneself to be a professional) is not relevant because it is a concept which describes how practitioners perceive themselves within their occupational contexts and how they communicate this to others (Neary, 2014). As this paper does not explore the perceptions of translators, this dimension is not relevant and hence is not employed in the following discussion.

## **2.1. Professional Status**

Professional status is one of the key dimensions because, as noted by Burford et al. (2011), there are several approaches linking professionalism to the status of an occupational group, implying a role of societal esteem and high degree of expertise. In the present study, clients' responses were elicited so that a better understanding of their perception of the translator's professional status in society would come to light. For example, in the literature, translation is described as an auxiliary occupation, and translators tend to be portrayed as anonymous and subservient (e.g. Bassnett, 2002; Sela-Sheffy, 2006; Simeoni, 1998). Do clients have similar opinions? Guided by the paramedic professionalism construct, nine items related to the professional status of translators are included: (1) translation is "a profession", not just a "job"; (2) the translation occupation is vital to society; (3) translators have a real "calling" for their work; (4) it is encouraging to see the high quality of translation work done by translators in this field; (5) translators can exercise their own judgment in their jobs; (6) becoming a translator requires a high degree of expertise and knowledge; (7) translators have the same status as other people in the field of language do; (8) translators have the same status as other people in the field of communication do; and (9) translation organizations should be supported.

## **2.2. Proactive Behavior at Work**

Regarding the professional attitudes and behavior dimensions, Carter et al. (2015) identified several clusters: (1) effective interactions with service users; (2) effective interaction with others working in the field; (3) reliability; (4) knowledge and commitment to continuous improvement of competence; (5) flexibility; (6) the adherence to ethical practice principles; and (7) behavior outside work.

The first five clusters are closely related when they are applied to the field of translation. For example, during the translation process, a translator needs to communicate with different people and needs to be reliable, competent, knowledgeable, committed and flexible to finish a translation assignment. Therefore, the five clusters were consolidated to become one dimension, "proactive behavior at work." This dimension contains four items: (1) translators can communicate with people who do not know much about translation; (2) translators should be counted on to complete tasks on time; (3) translators should go "above and beyond" to help colleagues/teammates/clients to finish translation tasks; and (4) translators should read books/articles/current information related to translation and language.

## **2.3. Adherence to Ethical Practice Principles**

As mentioned above, Translation Studies scholars attach great importance to the translator's ethical behavior. The adherence to ethical practice principles (cluster 6 listed above), thus becomes a dimension for the present study. Guided by the paramedic professionalism construct, the adherence to ethical practice principles covers these five items: (1) translators should report an error even if no one else was aware of the mistake; (2) translators should keep all information confidential; (3)

translators should follow the code of conduct suggested/given by employers/supervisors/clients; (4) the like or dislike for the materials that the translator renders should not affect the translation quality; and (5) translators should understand clients' requirements thoroughly in order to finish their tasks.

## 2.4. Behavior Outside Work

Practitioners' behavior outside work (cluster 7) becomes a dimension for this study because in the literature, translators' behavior outside work is seldom empirically studied. This topic, nonetheless, is worthy of attention because online communities, such as Facebook, may introduce complex transference issues in the translator-client relationship. The paramedic professionalism construct lists three items to understand practitioners' behavior outside work: (1) practitioners should behave in a professional manner outside work; (2) practitioners can post pictures at work on online communities such as Facebook; and (3) practitioners won't be seen in uniform when off duty. As translators are normally not required to wear a uniform in the workplace, the third item is irrelevant to the present study and thus not included.

The above has explained the dimensions of translator professionalism, including professional status, proactive behavior at work, adherence to ethical practice principles, and behavior outside work. Clients' perspectives were analyzed via quantitative data collected from a questionnaire survey (see Table 1 for the instrument scheme which lists the four dimensions and related items). According to Carter et al. (2015), organizational context and situational awareness are also key dimensions. The present study collects clients' opinions from an open-ended question in the questionnaire, so that analyses can be done in a context described by the respondents. The definition of the two dimensions and the analyses are reported in Section 4.

This study used a questionnaire, written in English, to collect data. The first part concerned the client's background information. After that, data regarding the client's perception of the various items related to translator professionalism, as shown in the survey instrument scheme in Table 1, were collected. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = indifferent; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree). The last part contained an open-ended question with an aim to elicit the respondent's viewpoints on translator professionalism in relation to situational awareness and organizational context.

On July 1, 2016, clients in Asia were invited to participate in the study. The author first conducted a pilot study by inviting three clients—one from Hong Kong, one from China and one from Taiwan—to fill out the questionnaire and provide feedback on it. The respondents expressed that they found no problem with the questionnaire when completing it. After this pilot study was completed, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect data. Clients were mainly located from the following Internet websites: Translator Pub; LinkedIn; ProZ; Translator Café; Taipei Translators & Interpreters Union and etogether.net. A private message inviting the recipient to fill out the questionnaire was sent via the site's mail system or the email obtained from the site. The invitation message stated the objectives of the research and the methodology that would be used, in addition to explaining how the recipient was found. After receiving the recipient's confirmation, the questionnaire, along with a cover letter, was sent to the person via email. By July 31, 2018, a total of 72 completed and valid questionnaires were returned.

## 3. RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The present study provides a snapshot of clients' perceptions of translator professionalism, as reported by 72 clients in Asia. In this study, clients were classified into three types. According to the responses, they were mostly middlemen between readers and authors ( $n = 64$ , 88.9%). These middlemen were either from translation agencies or were responsible for hiring translators in the company. Only eight respondents (11.1%) were clients who were readers in need of a translation because they did not

**Table 1. Survey instrument scheme developed for investigating translator professionalism perceived by clients**

Dimensions	Items Derived From the Paramedic Professionalism Construct
Professional status	1. Translation is “a profession”, not just a “job”.
	2. The translation occupation is vital to society.
	3. Translators have a real “calling” for their work.
	4. It is encouraging to see the high quality of translation work done by translators in this field.
	5. Translators can exercise their own judgment in their jobs.
	6. Becoming a translator requires a high degree of expertise and knowledge.
	7. Translators have the same status as other people in the field of language do.
	8. Translators have the same status as other people in the field of communication do.
	9. Translation organizations should be supported.
Proactive behavior at work	1. Translators can communicate with people who do not know much about translation.
	2. Translators should be counted on to complete tasks on time.
	3. Translators should go “above and beyond” to help colleagues/teammates/clients to finish translation tasks.
	4. Translators should read books/articles/current information related to translation and language.
Adherence to ethical practice principles	1. Translators should report an error even if no one else was aware of the mistake.
	2. Translators should keep all information confidential.
	3. Translators should follow the code of conduct suggested/given by employers/supervisors/clients.
	4. The like or dislike for the materials that the translator renders should not affect the translation quality.
	5. Translators should understand clients’ requirements thoroughly in order to finish their tasks.
Behavior outside work	1. Translators can post pictures of themselves at work or of their translation work on social networks (e.g. Facebook).
	2. Translators should behave in a professional manner outside work.

understand the source language. None of the clients participating in the present study was an author who had written a text and was having a translator render it.

Table 2 shows the geographical distribution of the clients: 18 (25%) were from China, 13 (18%) were from Hong Kong, 1 (1.4%) was from Indonesia, 16 (22.2%) were from Japan, 5 (6.9%) were from Korea, 1 (1.4%) was from Macau, 2 (2.8%) were from Malaysia, 4 (5.6%) were from Singapore, 4(5.6%) were from Taiwan, 6 (8.3%) were from Thailand and 2 (2.8%) were from Vietnam. These figures demonstrate an uneven distribution of respondents in the various Asian countries; some are under-represented in the sample because a non-probability convenience sampling method was used. However, the majority of the clients taking part in the study were fairly experienced in hiring translators. In the questionnaire, clients were asked how many translators (full-time, part-time and freelancers) they hired the previous year. The data show that, on average, they hired 24 freelance, 17 full-time and 5 part-time translators.

Of the 72 clients, 47 (65.3%) were male and 25 (34.7%) were female. Most of them (n=63, 87.5%) were not translation graduates. Regarding the highest level of education received, 1 (1.4%) reported college education, 30 (41.7%) reported undergraduate education, 40 (55.5%) reported some postgraduate education, of whom 6 reported completing a doctorate. One client did not answer.

In the following, the clients’ perceptions of translator professionalism will be reported on. Their perspectives of translators’ professional status, the adherence to ethical practice principles, proactive

**Table 2. Geographical distribution of the respondents**

Country/City	No. of Respondents	Frequency (%)
China	18	25.0
Hong Kong	13	18.0
Indonesia	1	1.4
Japan	16	22.2
Korea	5	6.9
Macau	1	1.4
Malaysia	2	2.8
Singapore	4	5.6
Taiwan	4	5.6
Thailand	6	8.3
Vietnam	2	2.8
Total	72	100.0

behavior at work and behavior outside work will be empirically examined. Analysis will also be made to see whether differences in viewpoints among clients exist in different Asia countries. In addition, comparisons between the two types of clients (those who are middlemen and those who are readers) will be conducted.

As mentioned, translators are depicted in Translation Studies literature as anonymous and subservient. Bassnett mentioned that translation is “in short, a low status occupation” (2002, p. 12). In reality, do clients also perceive translation as a low-status occupation and view the status of translators as marginal? The results shown in Table 3 suggest that the Asian clients taking part in the study, to a great extent, do not perceive translation as a low-status occupation, because they regard the translation occupation as vital to society (mean = 4.14, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). They agree that it is encouraging to see the high quality of translation work done by translators in the field (mean = 4.32). The clients also agree that becoming a translator requires a high degree of expertise and knowledge (mean = 4.13). In the workplace, the clients somewhat agree that translators have a real “calling” for their work (mean = 3.92) and translation organizations should be supported (mean = 3.94). However, the clients are not so certain when they were asked whether translators have the same status as other people in the fields of language and communication do. The means are 3.45 and 3.33 respectively, indicating that clients tended to answer “indifferent”. In addition, it was found there are divergent views on whether translation is “a profession”, not just a “job” (standard deviation = 1.04) among the clients. But the discrepancy is not statistically significant, as indicated in the result of an ANOVA test ( $p = 0.48$ ) comparing the viewpoints between clients in different Asian countries. Similar to clients, Translation Studies scholars hold different opinions on whether or not translation is a profession, semi-profession or non-profession. Tyulenev argues that based on Abraham Flexner’s definition of the term “profession” and the criteria, translation is an occupation in the process of professionalizing (Tyulenev, 2015).

The data suggest that the clients attach great importance to translators’ adherence to ethical practice principles, because all mean values shown in Table 4 are over 4.00, indicating that clients tended to agree with the related items. According to Schweda Nicholson, “confidentiality is a key component of all codes of ethics which pertain to interpreters and translators (Schweda Nicholson, 1994, p. 92). Clients are of the same mind, as they agree that translators should keep all information confidential (mean = 4.51), should understand the requirements thoroughly in order to finish tasks

**Table 3. Clients' perceptions of the professional status of translators**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
It is encouraging to see the high quality of translation work done by translators in this field.	4.32	0.92
Translation is "a profession", not just a "job".	4.25	1.04
The translation occupation is vital to society.	4.14	0.83
Becoming a translator requires a high degree of expertise and knowledge.	4.13	0.85
Translation organizations should be supported.	3.94	0.71
Translators have a real "calling" for their work.	3.92	0.83
Translators can exercise their own judgment in their jobs.	3.76	0.81
Translators have the same status as other people in the field of language do.	3.45	1.00
Translators have the same status as other people in the field of communication do.	3.33	0.99

(mean = 4.45), and should follow the code of conduct suggested/ given by employers/ supervisors/ clients (mean = 4.32). Also, the clients seem to understand that translation is a complex process involving languages, cultures, technology and people. Errors unavoidably occur. The translator as a gatekeeper is thus seen to be of great importance by the clients, because they agree that translators should report an error even if no one else is aware of the mistake (mean = 4.29). In addition, the clients tend to expect that once the translator accepts an assignment, the person's preference for the materials should not affect the translation quality (mean = 4.22).

Several statistical tests were done to further compare the perceptions held by clients living in different places in Asia and to analyze whether differences exist in the opinions between those who are middlemen and those who are readers. However, no statistically significant differences were found. This suggests that clients in different Asian countries have similar thoughts on translators' adherence to ethical practice principles.

When discussing translators' proactive behavior at work, clients place heavy emphasis on translators' reliability to complete tasks on time (high mean = 4.42 and low standard deviation of 0.78, shown in Table 5). The importance of translators' reliability is also highlighted by Translation Studies scholars. Sofer (2006) stressed that reliability is particularly important to freelance translators because it is their most important personal asset. However, in the sample, the clients were not so certain of the importance of the translator's ability to communicate with people who do not know much about translation. They were also less certain that translators should go "above and beyond" to

**Table 4. Clients' perceptions of translators' adherence to ethical practice principles**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Translators should keep all information confidential.	4.51	0.80
Translators should understand clients' requirements thoroughly in order to finish their tasks.	4.45	0.75
Translators should follow the code of conduct suggested/given by employers/supervisors/clients.	4.32	0.80
Translators should report an error even if no one else was aware of the mistake.	4.29	0.91
The like or dislike for the materials that the translator renders should not affect the translation quality.	4.22	0.95



help colleagues/ teammates/ clients to finish translation tasks. The mean values for these two items are 3.68 and 3.47 respectively, indicating that clients tended to answer “indifferent”.

The clients tend to agree that translators should read books/ articles/current information related to translation and language in order to stay current on the latest developments in the field (mean=4.01). This is consistent with Ferguson, who notes that translation has been selected as one of the top 100 fastest-growing careers for the 21st century (Ferguson, 2009), and suggests that “interpreters and translators need to constantly work and study to keep abreast of the changing linguistic trends for a given language” (ibid, p. 203).

As mentioned earlier, in the literature, translators’ behavior outside work is seldom empirically studied. However, this topic is worthy of attention. For instance, translators’ postings about their work on online platforms may show information that clients do not want to be disclosed. The clients taking part in the study have divergent viewpoints on whether or not translators can post pictures of themselves at work or of their translation work on social networks (high standard deviation = 1.16, as shown in Table 6). To better understand the discrepancies, several statistical tests were conducted. A t-test comparing the two types of clients found no statistically significant differences. But when ANOVA was used to compare the differences between the countries in which the clients lived, a statistically significant result was found ( $p = 0.024$ ), implying that, among the clients in different countries, there exists a considerable range of viewpoints on the issue of translators posting pictures on online communities (e.g. Facebook) of themselves at work or of their translation work. In addition, Table 6 shows that the clients are indifferent to whether translators should behave in a professional manner outside work (mean = 3.38). On average, the clients who are readers attach greater importance to translators’ professional manner outside work (mean = 4.00) than do the clients who are middlemen between authors and readers (mean = 3.30). The difference is statistically significant, as shown in the result of a t-test ( $p = 0.046$ ). However, the reasons for these discrepancies cannot be extrapolated solely from the data collected. This is a worthy topic for future research.

#### 4. RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Clients were asked to answer an open-ended question (optional) in the survey so that their perspectives in relation to organizational contexts and situational awareness could be analyzed. In this study, organizational context adopts a macro perspective to enable a client to reflect on the professionalism of translators in the place where the client lives and/or the organization in which the person works. Situational awareness takes a micro perspective to allow individual clients to express their opinions on the practical, technical and communication skills of translators.

Of the 72 clients who completed the questionnaire, 10 offered responses to the open-ended question. Coincidentally, the 10 clients are middlemen between authors and readers. Of these responses, seven are related to organizational contexts. A client who is from Hong Kong described the current

**Table 5. Clients’ perceptions of translators’ proactive behavior at work**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Translators should be counted on to complete tasks on time.	4.42	0.78
Translators should read books/articles/current information related to translation and language.	4.01	0.81
Translators can communicate with people who do not know much about translation	3.68	0.85
Translators should go “above and beyond” to help colleagues/teammates/clients to finish translation tasks.	3.47	0.92

**Table 6. Clients' perceptions of translators' behavior outside work**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Translators should behave in a professional manner outside work.	3.38	0.94
Translators can post pictures of themselves at work or of their translation work on social networks (e.g. Facebook).	2.35	1.16

context of the Hong Kong translation industry: “the large number of people who mistake translators and interpreters: clearly the public is badly informed about these two very different professions”.

Three other clients strongly believed that the lack of specific entrance criteria affects the professional image of translators. A client from Korea noted that “in Korea, there are a lot of unqualified translators” and stressed that there is a need to establish a national certification system so that translators can be recognized as professionals. Another client, who is from Japan, added that the possession of relevant experience is important to enter a particular area of the translation industry. For example, one should have experience and knowledge of business to do commercial translation. In fact, this issue —the lack of specific market entrance criteria or a certificate system—has also been a much-discussed issue in Translation Studies in recent decades (see Pym et al., 2013). To establish translator status signaling mechanisms, a client in Singapore highlights the importance of incorporating codes of ethics and standards of practice which every qualified translator should follow, particularly in this digital era. The client elaborates:

*...there are more online scammers/imposters who fake and steal CVs from qualified translators to obtain jobs from translation companies/agencies and direct customers.[...] Fake translators always fight for a piece of the pie with unbelievable low prices without any responsibility to the clients who gave them the job without knowing being scam. Fake translators have nothing to lose. They get paid and disappeared immediately.*

Of the ten clients who replied to the open-ended question, three gave responses exhibiting situational awareness, which reflects translators' practical, technical and communication skills. Comments from a client in Singapore are particularly noteworthy:

*Many translators, though they claim to be professional, cannot manage simple things like formatting of files, especially if they have to work with tables in MS Word, or when working with Excel or Powerpoint files. They expect the client to tidy up the files upon delivery. [...] There are some translators who do not have the courtesy of giving a reply or acknowledgement when I send in requests for quotes or enquiries. No matter how busy they are or if they are not able to take the job, they should reply to the requester.*

This client highly values translators' technical and communication skills. These opinions are shared by translation service providers in Europe, who also asserted that technical and generic professional competences are current and emerging requirements within the European translation industry (Optimale, 2012).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper is to study the way clients in Asia perceive translator professionalism, via a questionnaire which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. In general, the Asian clients

have similar views on translator professionalism. The differences in their perceptions of most of the items on the questionnaire are not statistically significant.

Although the clients have slightly divergent views on whether translation is a profession, they do perceive that the translation occupation is vital to society and recognize that translators have a high degree of expertise and knowledge. In addition, the Asian clients, no matter where they live and whether they are middlemen or readers, lay emphasis on translators' adherence to ethical practice principles. And while the clients attach importance to translators' proactive behavior at work, such as reliability, they have different viewpoints on translators' behavior outside work. Also, the clients point out that the lack of a certification system affects the professional image of translators and the healthy development of the field. The problem has become particularly serious in the digital era, because it is not easy for clients to verify a translator's curriculum vitae and assess his or her skills. Clients may have to undergo processes of trial and error to identify suitable candidates to handle their assignments.

The present study adapted the paramedic professionalism construct to develop a questionnaire for collecting and analyzing Asian translation clients' opinions. Notice has to be taken that the two fields are different. Although items in the construct were modified to suit the objective and context of the present study which focuses on the field of translation, this limitation (the adaptation of the paramedic professionalism construct) should be noted.

Using a questionnaire to collect data is relatively cost- and time-efficient, though there are limitations that cannot be overlooked. As noted by Cargan (2007), self-reported data raise concerns regarding validity because it is difficult to ensure that respondents answered honestly. Therefore, an email message was sent to the client explaining the objectives of the project, and why and how he/she was contacted. This was done to ensure that the client was interested in and willing to participate before the questionnaire was sent out. Also, caution was taken when drawing conclusions, given that the analysis was based on only 72 clients in Asia. Although the sample size is enough upon which to base statistics, it does not represent the vast market in any controlled way. In addition, most of the clients were middlemen. Only eight respondents were clients who are readers in need of the translation because they do not understand the source language. Having said that, the present study may serve as a basis for future research into this type of client. In spite of these limitations, the findings of this study allow translators, clients and scholars to have a more informed perception of translator professionalism. These findings can also be used by teachers in translator training programs to give their students a better idea of how to develop their professionalism and interact with clients.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The research was supported by General Research Fund under the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong [GRF 18604416].

## REFERENCES

- Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation studies*. London: Routledge.
- Burford, B., Madeline, C., Morrow, G., Rothwell, C., Illing, J., & McLachlan, J. (2011). *Progress report for study 2 — Developing of quantitative approaches to professionalism*. School of Medicine and Health, Durham University.
- Cargan, L. (2007). *Doing social research*. UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Carter, M., Hesselgreaves, H., Rothwell, C., Crampton, P., Burford, B., McLachlan, J., & Illing, J. (2015). Measuring professionalism as a multi-dimensional construct. Professionalism and conscientiousness in healthcare professionals — Study 2. Final report for the HCPC. School of Medicine and Health, Durham University, and School of Medical Education, Newcastle University.
- Chesterman, A., & Wagner, E. (2014). *A dialogue between the ivory tower and the wordface*. London: Routledge.
- Cragie, S., Higgins, I., Hervey, S., & Gambarotta, P. (2016). *Thinking Italian translation: A course in translation method: Italian to English*. London: Routledge.
- Dam, H. V., & Zethsen, K. K. (2008). Translator status: A study of Danish company translators. *The Translator*, 14(1), 71–96. doi:10.1080/13556509.2008.10799250
- Givati, A., Makham, C., & Street, K. (2018). The bargaining of professionalism in emergency care practice: NHS paramedics and higher education. *Advances in Health Sciences Education: Theory and Practice*, 23(2), 323–369. doi:10.1007/s10459-017-9802-1 PMID:29127541
- Gough, S. (2018). Welcoming paramedics into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine*, 15(4), 1–2. doi:10.33151/ajp.15.4.675
- Heard, R. (2017). FIT position paper on the future for professional translators. *Babel*, 63(4), 602–604. doi:10.1075/babel.63.4.09hea
- Jiménez-Crespo, M. A. (2017). *Crowdsourcing and online collaborative translations: Expanding the limits of translation studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing. doi:10.1075/btl.131
- Kafi, M., Khoshsaligheh, M., & Hashemi, M. R. (2018). Translation profession in Iran: Current challenges and future prospects. *The Translator*, 24(1), 89–103. doi:10.1080/13556509.2017.1297693
- Katan, D. (2009). Translation theory and professional practice: A global survey of the great divide. *Hermes*, 42, 111–153.
- Kiraly, D. (2014). *A social constructivist approach to translator education. Empowerment from theory to practice*. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781315760186
- Kościałkowska-Okońska, E. (2012). Translation professionalism and translation quality in interpreter training: A survey. In Ł. Bogucki & M. Deckert (Eds.), *Teaching translation and interpreting: Advances and perspectives* (pp. 93–107). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.
- Neary, S. (2014). Professional identity: What I call myself defines who I am. *Career Matters*, 2(3), 14–15.
- Nord, C. (1997). *Translating as a purposeful activity: functionalist approaches explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Optimale. (2012). Optimizing professional translator training in a multilingual Europe. Erasmus network for professional translator training. Retrieved from <http://www.translator-training.eu>
- Orlando, M. (2016). *Training 21st century translators and interpreters: At the crossroads of practice, research and pedagogy* (Vol. 21). Frank & Timme GmbH.
- Prunč, E. (2007). Priests, princes and pariahs. Constructing the professional field of translation. In M. Wolf & A. Fukari (Eds.), *Constructing a sociology of translation* (pp. 39–56). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/btl.74.03pru

- Pym, A. (2006). Introduction. In A. Pym, M. Shlesinger, & Z. Jettmarová (Eds.), *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting* (pp. 1–26). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/btl.67.02pym
- Pym, A., Grin, F., Sfreddo, C., & Chan, A. (2013). *The status of the translation profession in the European Union*. New York: Anthem Press.
- Risku, H., Pein-Weber, C., & Milošević, J. (2016). The task of the translator: Comparing the views of the client and the translator. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 989–1008.
- Robinson, D. (1997). *Becoming a translator: An accelerated course*. London: Routledge.
- Ruokonen, M., & Mäkisalo, J. (2018). Middling-status profession, high-status work: Finnish translators' status perceptions in the light of their backgrounds, working conditions and job satisfaction. *Translation and Interpreting*, 10(1), 1–17.
- Schweda Nicholson, N. (1994). Professional ethics for court and community interpreters. In D. L. Hammond (Ed.), *Professional issues for translators and interpreters* (pp. 79–98). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/ata.vii.10sch
- Sela-Sheffy, R. (2006). The pursuit of symbolic capital by a semi-professional group: The case of literary translators in Israel. In M. Wolf (Ed.), *Übersetzen – translating – traduire: Towards a “social turn”?* (pp. 243–252). London: Lit-Verlag.
- Simeoni, D. (1998). The pivotal status of the translator's habitus. *Target*, 10(1), 1–39. doi:10.1075/target.10.1.02sim
- Sofer, M. (2006). *The translator's handbook*. Rockville: Schreiber Pub.
- Scott, E. (2009). The top 100: The fastest-growing careers for the 21st century. New York: Ferguson.
- Tyulenev, S. (2015). Towards theorizing translation as an occupation. *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*, 2(1), 15–29. doi:10.1080/23306343.2015.1013206
- Williams, B., Onsmann, A., & Brown, T. (2009). From stretcher-bearer to paramedic: The Australian paramedics' move towards professionalization. *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care*, 7(4), 1–12.
- Williams, B., Onsmann, A., & Brown, T. (2012). Is the Australian paramedic discipline a profession? A national perspective. *International Paramedic Practice*, 1(5), 161–168. doi:10.12968/ippr.2012.1.5.161
- Wolf, M. (2010). Sociology of translation. In Y. Gambier & L. van Doorslaer (Eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies* (pp. 337–343). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/hts.1.soc1