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Revisiting Translation Professionalization: A Hybrid Model Based on Tseng's Framework

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Kang, Myoung Sook. 2025. Revisiting Translation Professionalization: A Hybrid Model Based on Tseng's Framework. ***Sign Languages and Linguistics Convergence Research,*** *2*(2), 113-136. This study revisits Tseng's (1992) model of translation professionalization to examine its relevance in the context of globalization, artificial intelligence, and transnational governance. While Tseng's framework has provided a foundational sociological account of how translation seeks professional legitimacy, its original linear structure is increasingly inadequate for explaining the complexity of contemporary translation ecosystems. Drawing on sociological theories of professions and recent developments in AI-mediated translation practice, this article reconceptualizes translation professionalization as a non-linear, cyclical, and adaptive process.

Focusing on Tseng's core dimensions—competence, education and training, professional associations, and ethical institutionalization—the study proposes a hybrid model in which these components operate concurrently and are continuously mediated by technological innovation, ethical sustainability, and global governance. Comparative discussions of Malaysia and Korea further illustrate how professionalization trajectories are shaped by local policy environments, market conditions, and levels of digital adoption. By integrating sociological insight with technological and ethical perspectives, this article advances a dynamic understanding of translation professionalization and highlights its implications for translator education, professional regulation, and policy development in the twenty-first century.

Key Words: Translation Professionalization, Tseng's Model, Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Sustainability, Global Governance, Translator Education

1. Introduction

Translation today occupies a complex position within globalized communication networks, where linguistic exchange, technological innovation, and professional ethics intersect. The field has evolved from a linguistic craft into a strategic knowledge industry that supports diplomacy, commerce, and digital media. Yet despite its indispensable social and economic role, translation continues to struggle for full professional recognition and institutional legitimacy. Questions about translator autonomy, quality assurance, and ethical accountability persist, revealing structural gaps in the global configuration of translation work.

The professionalization of translation has long been a central concern in translation studies. Tseng's (1992) sociological model remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding how translation and interpreting gradually developed from loosely organized occupations into structured professions. Her model delineates four interrelated stages—market disorder, educational formation, professional organization, and ethical institutionalization—through which the translation field seeks to achieve social legitimacy. However, Tseng's framework was conceived in the late twentieth century, prior to the transformative effects of globalization, digital communication, and artificial intelligence.

In the twenty-first century, translation operates within technologically mediated and globally networked contexts that transcend national boundaries. The rapid advancement of neural machine translation, localization, and multimodal communication has disrupted traditional notions of translator expertise and control. At the same time, global ethical concerns—such as data privacy, algorithmic fairness, and intellectual-property rights—have redefined what it means to be a professional in a digital society. Within this dynamic environment, Tseng's original model, while still conceptually powerful, requires reinterpretation to reflect the hybrid and evolving nature of translation practice.

This study aims to revisit and expand Tseng's model of translation professionalization from a sociological perspective, integrating contemporary developments in technology, sustainability, and global governance. By doing so, it seeks to answer three interrelated questions: (1) How can Tseng's four-phase model be reconceptualized to address the challenges of globalization and AI-driven translation

ecosystems? (2) What new dimensions of professionalization—technological competence, ethical sustainability, and institutional policy—emerge in the twenty-first century? and (3) How do sociocultural contexts, particularly in Malaysia and Korea, illustrate the continuing negotiation between local practice and global professional norms?

Through this theoretical reinterpretation, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of translation as both a sociological and ethical phenomenon. It argues that professionalization today must be understood as a fluid, interdisciplinary process that combines education, ethics, and institutional governance with the technological realities of global communication.

1.1. Theoretical Background: Tseng's Model and Sociological Perspectives

The concept of *professionalization* has been widely explored in sociology as the process by which an occupation evolves into a recognized profession through the development of specialized knowledge, ethical norms, and institutional legitimacy. In translation studies, Tseng's (1992) model represents one of the earliest attempts to interpret this process within a sociological framework. By applying theories of social organization and occupational autonomy, Tseng conceptualized translation and interpreting as emergent professions striving for recognition within complex socio-economic systems.

1.1.1. Tseng's Model of Professionalization

Tseng (1992) proposed a four-phase model to describe the developmental trajectory of interpreting—and, by extension, translation—as a profession. The first stage, market disorder, depicts a fragmented state in which practitioners lack formal qualifications, standard procedures, or institutional recognition. The second stage, educational formation, marks the emergence of training institutions that codify skills and establish curricular frameworks. The third phase, professional association, involves collective organization through associations that define standards, advocate for the profession, and foster solidarity. Finally, ethical and

legal institutionalization signals the establishment of formal codes of conduct and legal protection, marking the field's consolidation as a profession.

Tseng's model is both chronological and cumulative: each stage builds upon the previous one to strengthen professional identity and public legitimacy. However, the model assumes a relatively linear progression from occupational disorganization to full professionalization. While this structure was effective in explaining developments in late-twentieth-century Taiwan and similar contexts, it requires re-examination in light of the complex, non-linear evolution of global professions today.

1.1.2. Sociological Theories of Professions

Tseng's framework aligns with and extends key sociological theories of professions. Abbott (1988) conceptualized the system of professions as a dynamic ecology of interdependent fields competing for jurisdiction over expertise. Professions, in Abbott's view, are defined by their ability to claim control over specific kinds of knowledge and to negotiate boundaries with other professions. Translation's position within this system remains fragile: while translators hold specialized linguistic and intercultural knowledge, their jurisdiction is frequently contested by technology, institutions, and market actors.

Larson (1977) provided a complementary perspective, describing professionalization as a *collective mobility project* through which practitioners seek to secure social and economic privileges by formalizing their expertise. Professions, according to Larson, are socially constructed entities that depend on symbolic control and the institutionalization of trust. Tseng's emphasis on education and ethics echoes Larson's argument that professions must construct legitimacy through moral and intellectual authority rather than market success alone.

Freidson (2001) introduced another vital dimension: the concept of *professional autonomy*. He argued that professions constitute a "third logic" of social organization, distinct from both market and bureaucratic control. This autonomy, sustained through self-regulation and ethical commitment, is what allows professionals to act in the public interest. Tseng's model implicitly embodies this

notion: the progression toward ethical and legal institutionalization signifies the attainment of professional autonomy within translation and interpreting.

Sela-Sheffy (2005) further advanced this discussion by analyzing the *habitus* of translators as cultural producers navigating between symbolic capital and social recognition. She argued that professional identity is constructed not only through formal structures but also through discursive practices and internalized values. This sociocultural approach complements Tseng's structural model by emphasizing agency and identity formation among translators themselves.

1.1.3. Rethinking Tseng's Model in Global Context

While Tseng's framework provides a robust foundation, the nature of professionalization has changed dramatically since the early 1990s. Globalization, transnational education, and the proliferation of digital platforms have redefined the ways expertise is created, shared, and validated. The linear pathway from market disorder to institutional consolidation no longer fully captures the dynamic and decentralized nature of professional development in the twenty-first century.

Translation today operates within a *networked ecology* rather than a single national system. Cross-border collaborations, international standards such as ISO 17100, and digital certification platforms have made professionalization both global and pluralistic. Furthermore, technological disruptions—especially machine translation and AI-assisted tools—have blurred the traditional boundaries of human expertise. As Pym (2011) observes, technology does not eliminate the translator but reconfigures the nature of translation work, demanding new forms of competence and ethical awareness.

Freidson's (2001) notion of professionalism as a moral and autonomous logic becomes particularly relevant in this context. Translators are increasingly required to make ethical judgments in technologically mediated environments, balancing efficiency with integrity. Consequently, Tseng's model must be reinterpreted as a cyclical and adaptive process that accounts for the recursive interplay among education, technology, ethics, and institutional structures.

1.1.4. The Need for a Reinterpretation

In light of these transformations, this paper argues that Tseng's (1992) four-phase model remains conceptually significant but must be expanded to encompass three key twenty-first-century dimensions:

(1) Technological mediation, which reshapes the skills and responsibilities of translators;
(2) Ethical sustainability, which ensures professional integrity and social accountability in the digital age; and
(3) Global interconnectedness, which redefines professional boundaries and standards across national and institutional contexts.

These dimensions do not replace Tseng's stages but intersect with them, forming a hybrid framework in which education, ethics, and governance are continually renegotiated. This reinterpretation situates translation professionalization within broader debates on knowledge economies, global justice, and sustainable communication.

1.2. Reinterpreting Tseng's Model in the Global Context

Tseng's (1992) model of professionalization provided a clear structural framework for understanding how translation and interpreting transitioned from informal practices to recognized professions. However, the profound social and technological transformations of the twenty-first century compel us to revisit her four-phase model from a global and interdisciplinary perspective. Globalization, the rise of digital economies, and the rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) have redefined not only the material conditions of translation work but also its ethical foundations and social meaning. To reinterpret Tseng's model for the present era, it is essential to understand how these changes reshape the traditional relationship between expertise, education, and institutional legitimacy.

1.2.1. From Linear Development to Dynamic Professionalization

Tseng's model describes professionalization as a sequential process of institutional growth: from market disorder to education, association, and ethical codification. While this progression effectively explains the historical development of translation in localized contexts, it does not account for the recursive and networked nature of professionalization in today's interconnected world. The translation field now functions within an environment of dynamic professionalization, where education, technology, and ethics continuously interact rather than follow a predetermined order.

Globalization has blurred geographical boundaries, creating what Abbott (1988) termed a system of interdependent professions. Translators operate in transnational networks that link universities, professional associations, corporations, and online communities. These overlapping jurisdictions often generate both collaboration and competition. The rise of global standards such as ISO 17100 has provided a shared professional framework, yet the multiplicity of local practices demonstrates that professionalization is not a uniform process but a global mosaic. In this context, Tseng's linear model must be reimagined as a cyclical and pluralistic structure that accommodates simultaneous developments across different regions.

Freidson's (2001) idea of the "third logic" offers further insight into this shift. As translators navigate between market pressures and bureaucratic control, they rely increasingly on professional ethics and self-regulation to sustain their autonomy. Tseng's final stage—ethical institutionalization—therefore becomes not the endpoint of professionalization but a recurring process, continually renewed through ongoing negotiation between technology, institutions, and society.

1.2.2. Technological Mediation and Ethical Reflexivity

The technological turn in translation has fundamentally transformed how professionalization occurs. With the proliferation of neural machine translation, cloud-based platforms, and post-editing workflows, human translators now coexist with automated systems. While these tools have enhanced productivity, they have also challenged the notion of translators as the sole custodians of linguistic expertise.

As Cronin (2013) notes, technology has not displaced human translators but altered the very conditions of their labor. Translators must now master both linguistic and digital literacies, understanding how algorithms process, modify, and sometimes distort meaning. Professional competence, in this sense, extends to ethical reflexivity—the capacity to evaluate technological tools critically and to ensure that their use aligns with humanistic values.

Biel (2018) introduces the concept of technological accountability, emphasizing that ethical codes must adapt to digital realities. Confidentiality, accuracy, and impartiality remain core values, but they now coexist with new concerns such as data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and authorship attribution. Translators must thus engage with technology not merely as users but as ethical decision-makers who safeguard human dignity and cultural diversity.

Within Tseng's framework, technological mediation intersects all four stages. Market disorder now includes the chaotic proliferation of freelance platforms and automated translation systems; educational formation involves the integration of CAT tools, AI literacy, and data ethics into curricula; professional associations set standards for digital practice; and ethical institutionalization encompasses online confidentiality and the regulation of AI-assisted work. Technology does not represent a separate stage but rather a pervasive condition shaping the entire professionalization process.

1.2.3. Ethical Sustainability and Global Responsibility

Another crucial dimension in reinterpreting Tseng's model is the notion of ethical sustainability. The global translation industry, valued at over USD 60 billion, operates within the broader context of knowledge economies that prioritize efficiency and scalability. Yet, as Kang (2016) and Fulford (2012) argue, professional sustainability cannot be measured solely in economic terms; it must also include ethical, educational, and ecological dimensions.

Professionalization in the digital age requires a renewed commitment to social justice, inclusivity, and cultural preservation. Translators act as mediators of linguistic rights, ensuring that knowledge is accessible across languages and communities. This aligns with UNESCO's advocacy for multilingualism and the United Nations'

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. By reframing translation as a socially responsible profession, Tseng's model gains new relevance in the twenty-first century.

Ethical sustainability also encompasses working conditions. The gig economy and platform-based translation have created precarious labor environments, undermining professional stability. Associations and institutions must therefore redefine professional standards to include fair remuneration, workload transparency, and digital well-being. Tseng's final stage of ethical institutionalization should thus evolve into ethical sustainability, reflecting continuous adaptation to social and technological change.

1.2.4. Globalization and Professional Diversity

The globalization of translation has led to diverse models of professionalization across regions. In Europe, institutionalized structures such as the European Master's in Translation (EMT) framework emphasize standardized competencies and certification. In contrast, Asian contexts, including Malaysia and Korea, exhibit more fluid trajectories influenced by language policy, economic development, and educational infrastructure.

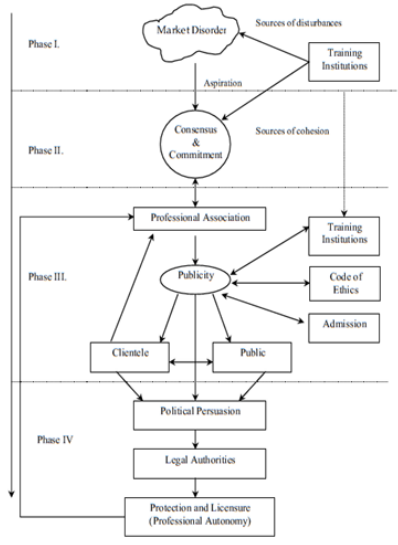
Kang (2016) observes that while both countries have made significant progress in translator education and association-building, they continue to face challenges in achieving full professional legitimacy. In Malaysia, translation often functions within government and academic institutions, whereas in Korea, a competitive market-driven environment fosters rapid technological adoption. These regional variations illustrate how Tseng's stages may unfold concurrently or cyclically rather than sequentially, reinforcing the need for a flexible model that accommodates cultural and institutional diversity.

Freidson's concept of professionalism as a moral order provides a unifying framework for understanding these variations. Regardless of region, professionalization ultimately depends on maintaining trust and ethical integrity within society. Translators in different contexts negotiate autonomy and authority differently, yet all contribute to a shared global discourse of professional responsibility.

1.2.5. Reinterpreting the Four Phases

To summarize, Tseng's four phases—market disorder, educational formation, professional association, and ethical institutionalization—remain relevant but must be reinterpreted as overlapping domains within a globalized, digitally mediated ecosystem:

1. **Market Disorder** now reflects the fragmentation of freelance and platform economies, where boundaries between professional and non-professional practice blur.
2. **Educational Formation** encompasses not only formal university programs but also online certifications, micro-credentials, and lifelong learning pathways.
3. **Professional Association** extends beyond national boundaries through virtual communities and transnational networks that promote solidarity and ethical discourse.
4. **Ethical Institutionalization** evolves into Ethical Sustainability, emphasizing continuous adaptation to global technological and moral challenges.



[Figure 1] Tseng's Model of Professionalization Process (1992: 43)

Reconceptualizing Tseng's model through these dimensions reveals professionalization as an ongoing negotiation among institutions, technologies, and moral values. It shifts the focus from structural completion to perpetual renewal, aligning translation with broader transformations in global knowledge work.

2. Comparative Reflections: Korea and Malaysia as Reflective Contexts

While Tseng's (1992) sociological model was initially developed in the context of Taiwan, its conceptual framework provides a useful lens for analyzing the professionalization of translation in diverse sociocultural settings. Malaysia and Korea—two countries with distinct linguistic landscapes and institutional histories—offer particularly rich comparative contexts. Both nations have pursued the professionalization of translation through education, policy, and association-building, yet their trajectories reveal differing emphases on institutionalization, market dynamics, and ethical norms. These variations illustrate how Tseng's four stages manifest under different cultural and economic conditions, thereby reinforcing the model's global applicability and its need for contextual adaptation.

2.1. Market Disorder and Early Institutional Formation

In both Malaysia and Korea, the earliest phase of translation professionalization corresponds closely to Tseng's concept of *market disorder*. Prior to the 1980s, translation in both countries was primarily treated as a linguistic or clerical function rather than a distinct profession. In Malaysia, translation was closely tied to nation-building and language policy following independence in 1957. The establishment of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) positioned translation as a tool for developing Malay as the national language, focusing primarily on literary and governmental translation. However, the profession itself remained loosely organized, with few standardized qualifications or ethical guidelines.

In Korea, a similar pattern emerged but with a stronger market orientation. The rapid economic growth of the 1970s and 1980s created demand for

technical and business translation, particularly in science, technology, and international trade. Translation was often performed by bilingual professionals in academia or industry, without formal certification. This mirrors Tseng's first phase, characterized by unregulated markets and informal practices. Yet, unlike Malaysia's state-driven development, Korea's translation industry evolved through private initiative, highlighting the diversity of pathways within Tseng's model.

2.2. Educational Formation and Academic Professionalization

The second phase in Tseng's framework—educational formation—marks the transition from informal practice to institutionalized knowledge. This phase has been particularly significant in both Malaysia and Korea, where universities began to formalize translation education in the 1990s. In Malaysia, the introduction of translation and interpreting programs at institutions such as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) reflected a growing recognition of translation as an academic discipline. Curricula began incorporating both linguistic theory and professional practice, aligning with international standards like the European Master's in Translation (EMT). However, challenges remain in bridging academic training with industry needs, as translation education often remains theoretical rather than practice-oriented.

Korea's development followed a slightly different trajectory. The establishment of the Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation (GSIT) at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) in 1979 marked a pivotal moment in the institutionalization of translation education. Modeled after Western programs, GSIT emphasized rigorous training, ethics, and practical skills, contributing significantly to the profession's social legitimacy. The Korean model demonstrates how Tseng's educational formation can occur early and decisively, supported by societal respect for education and high standards of professional performance.

Both contexts underscore the importance of education as the cornerstone of professionalization. Yet, as Kang (2016) observed, academic training alone does not guarantee professional recognition unless it is complemented by legal, institutional, and ethical frameworks. This aligns with Tseng's view that education represents only one stage within a broader, multi-dimensional process of professional growth.

2.3. Professional Associations and Institutional Legitimacy

Tseng's third phase—*professional association*—focuses on collective organization and self-governance. In Malaysia, the Malaysian Translators Association (*Persatuan Penterjemah Malaysia*, PPM), established in 1972, played a pioneering role in advocating for translators' rights and professional status. PPM collaborated with government agencies, universities, and international organizations such as the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT) to standardize practices and promote ethical awareness. However, membership remains relatively limited, reflecting broader challenges of mobilizing practitioners in a small and fragmented market. The association's success has been strongest in advocacy and training rather than in enforcing regulatory authority.

In contrast, Korea's Korean Association of Translators and Interpreters (KATI) and the Korean Society of Translators (KST) have established more structured systems for membership, certification, and continuing education. Korea's translation industry, supported by strong export-oriented sectors, has allowed associations to play an influential role in shaping market standards. Through partnerships with academic institutions and government agencies, these associations have developed certification schemes that parallel international practices such as ATA and NAATI accreditation. Korea thus demonstrates how professional associations can operate at both the national and transnational levels, reinforcing Tseng's third stage as a dynamic and recursive process.

2.4. Ethical and Legal Institutionalization

The final stage of Tseng's model—ethical and legal institutionalization—represents the culmination of professionalization, where the field attains normative and legal legitimacy. Both Malaysia and Korea have made progress in this area, though their trajectories differ in scope and emphasis. Malaysia's ethical frameworks are largely guided by institutional codes from DBP and PPM, emphasizing accuracy, confidentiality, and loyalty to clients and public institutions. However, enforcement mechanisms remain limited, and translation ethics often depend on individual discretion rather than legal obligation.

Korea has advanced further toward formalization, influenced by the country's strong legal and corporate governance culture. Codes of ethics established by GSIT, KATI, and KST integrate international principles such as impartiality, confidentiality, and continuous development. Moreover, the Korean government's increasing reliance on certified translators for official documents has reinforced translation's legitimacy as a regulated service. This progression illustrates Tseng's ethical institutionalization phase, adapted to a context where economic competitiveness and professional integrity converge.

Nonetheless, both countries face emerging challenges in the era of digital translation. The ethical codes developed in the 1990s and early 2000s did not anticipate issues related to AI, data privacy, and machine-assisted translation. Professional associations in both regions are now revising their ethical guidelines to address questions of authorship, accountability, and quality assurance in post-editing and automated environments. This adaptive evolution supports the reinterpretation of Tseng's final phase as a process of *ethical sustainability* rather than static institutionalization.

2.5. Lessons from the Comparative Contexts

The experiences of Malaysia and Korea affirm the enduring relevance of Tseng's sociological model while highlighting its necessary flexibility in diverse contexts. Three comparative insights emerge from this analysis:

1. Institutional Anchoring vs. Market Adaptability: Malaysia's state-centered approach emphasizes institutional legitimacy and language policy, while Korea's market-driven model prioritizes competitiveness and international alignment. Both reveal that professionalization is shaped by the balance between state authority and market forces.
2. Education as Cultural Capital: Both cases confirm that education serves as the foundation of professional recognition, yet it requires sustained alignment with industry standards and global ethics.
3. Ethical Modernization: The evolution of digital translation demands that ethical frameworks expand beyond traditional client-translator relationships to include data management, sustainability, and technological fairness.

These comparative reflections suggest that Tseng's model remains a valuable heuristic tool, but it must evolve into a *hybrid, context-sensitive framework* that accommodates diverse paths toward professional maturity. Malaysia and Korea demonstrate that professionalization is not a universal sequence but a process shaped by cultural values, policy environments, and technological readiness.

3. Toward a Hybrid Model of Professionalization

Reinterpreting Tseng's (1992) model in the twenty-first century requires a conceptual shift from linear, stage-based development to a hybrid, cyclical framework that captures the continuous interaction between education, technology, ethics, and global governance. This re-envisioned model recognizes that translation professionalization no longer unfolds within isolated national contexts but within an interconnected ecosystem shaped by digital transformation, sustainability imperatives, and the global movement of knowledge.

The hybrid model proposed here integrates three contemporary dimensions —technological mediation, ethical sustainability, and global governance—into Tseng's four foundational stages. Each element reinforces the others, forming a dynamic cycle that reflects the evolving reality of translation as a global knowledge profession.

3.1. Technological Mediation and the Evolution of Expertise

In the twenty-first century, technology functions as both catalyst and challenge to professionalization. Artificial intelligence (AI), neural machine translation (NMT), and automated localization systems have reconfigured how translators acquire, apply, and communicate expertise. As Cronin (2013) observes, technology amplifies the reach of translation while simultaneously destabilizing the boundaries of professional authority. Translators are no longer defined solely by linguistic competence but by their ability to critically engage with technological tools and ensure ethical oversight of automated systems.

Within this hybrid model, technological mediation intersects every phase of Tseng's original framework:

- **Market Disorder:** The proliferation of freelance platforms and unregulated digital markets replicates early forms of disorder, as new technologies enable participation by non-professionals.
- **Educational Formation:** Translator training now incorporates AI literacy, data ethics, and human-machine collaboration, reflecting the professional demand for hybrid competencies.
- **Professional Association:** Digital platforms facilitate global networking and online professional communities that function as virtual associations, providing mentorship, certification, and advocacy across borders.
- **Ethical Institutionalization:** Technology necessitates new codes of conduct addressing authorship, accountability, data security, and algorithmic transparency.

This technological layer transforms Tseng's linear sequence into an adaptive cycle, where innovation constantly challenges and renews professional norms. Translators must now master what Biel (2018) calls technological accountability—the ethical management of digital tools—to maintain public trust and uphold translation's humanistic purpose.

3.2. Ethical Sustainability and the Human Dimension

Professionalization, in Tseng's model, culminates in ethical and legal institutionalization. Yet, in the contemporary world, ethics cannot be viewed as a final stage; it must function as a sustaining principle that permeates every dimension of professional activity. The concept of ethical sustainability expands Tseng's final phase into a continuous moral engagement with social justice, inclusivity, and environmental consciousness.

Ethical sustainability rests on three interrelated pillars:

1. Social Inclusion: Professionalization must extend opportunities to underrepresented languages, cultures, and gender groups. Translation, as a mediator of linguistic rights, contributes to democratizing access to information and cultural participation.
2. Cultural Responsibility: Translators act as custodians of linguistic diversity.

Preserving minority languages and ensuring equitable access to multilingual communication are central to the ethical obligations of the profession.

3. Environmental and Digital Responsibility: Sustainability also encompasses environmental awareness and responsible digital practices. Translators engage in sustainable workflows by reducing energy-intensive processes and promoting data ethics in AI systems.

The Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) have begun integrating sustainability into professional standards, reflecting a global paradigm shift. Ethical sustainability thus positions translation as a profession deeply intertwined with human rights, ecological balance, and technological integrity.

In the hybrid model, ethics is not a culmination but an ongoing negotiation between moral principles and practical realities. Translators must continually evaluate how their choices—linguistic, technological, or institutional—affect communities and the environment.

3.3. Global Governance and Transnational Professionalization

Globalization has transformed translation into a transnational enterprise. International policies, regional frameworks, and supranational regulations increasingly shape how translation operates as a professional domain. The emergence of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (2024) exemplifies how legal instruments influence ethical standards across industries, including translation. This act, which mandates transparency, accountability, and human oversight in AI systems, sets a precedent for embedding ethical governance within digital practices.

Professional associations now collaborate across borders to create shared standards and mutual recognition of credentials. Initiatives such as the European Master's in Translation (EMT) and NAATI accreditation in Australia demonstrate how education and certification frameworks can converge globally while respecting local variation. These developments transform Tseng's national focus into a transnational paradigm, where professionalization is guided by both global governance and local adaptation.

Within this global context, professionalization entails not only individual competence but also institutional diplomacy. Translators, educators, and policymakers collectively shape the professional field through cross-border dialogue and collaboration. This dynamic reflects Abbott's (1988) concept of the *system of professions*—an interdependent network where each field negotiates legitimacy and authority in relation to others.

3.4. Integration of Sociological, Technological, and Ethical Dimensions

The hybrid model proposed here synthesizes Tseng's sociological structure with contemporary global realities. It retains Tseng's four developmental stages while embedding them in three cross-cutting dimensions—technology, ethics, and governance—that operate continuously rather than sequentially.

Tseng's Original Phases	Twenty-First-Century Dimensions	Reinterpreted Focus
Market Disorder	Technological Mediation	Managing digital disruption and platform economies
Educational Formation	Ethical Sustainability	Integrating AI, data ethics, and reflective practice into education
Professional Association	Global Governance	Building transnational networks and certification systems
Ethical Institutionalization	Interdisciplinary Sustainability	Continuous ethical and ecological adaptation

This integration transforms Tseng's linear model into an interactive framework that reflects translation's current evolution as a socially responsible, technologically mediated, and globally networked profession. The hybrid model aligns with Freidson's (2001) notion of professional autonomy, preserving the moral authority of human translators while embracing innovation and interdependence.

3.5. The Translator as a Knowledge Professional

Under the hybrid model, the translator emerges not simply as a linguistic

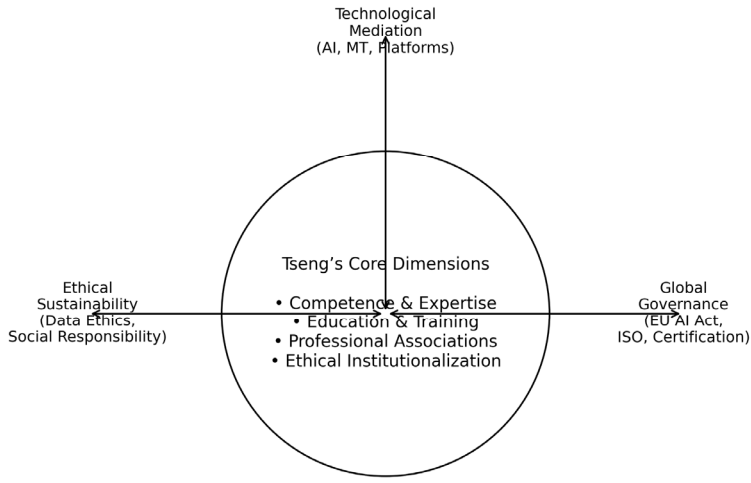
specialist but as a knowledge professional—a reflective practitioner who bridges human and machine intelligence. This conception emphasizes the translator's role as a mediator of meaning, ethics, and culture in an increasingly data-driven world. As technology automates repetitive tasks, translators contribute value through interpretive expertise, critical judgment, and ethical responsibility.

Such a redefinition aligns with Sela-Sheffy's (2005) idea of professional identity as a discursive construct shaped by habitus and symbolic capital. Translators maintain professional legitimacy not through resistance to change but through active participation in technological and ethical discourse. In this sense, professionalization is no longer the endpoint of a linear process but an enduring dialogue between tradition and transformation.

4. Implications for Translation Professionalization

Reinterpreting Tseng's (1992) model through sociological, technological, and ethical perspectives highlights translation professionalization as a continuous and adaptive process rather than a linear trajectory toward completion. In contemporary translation contexts shaped by artificial intelligence, platform-based labor, and transnational regulation, professionalization unfolds through ongoing negotiation among education, institutional legitimacy, technological mediation, and ethical responsibility. To synthesize the preceding analysis, this section discusses the key implications of reconceptualizing translation professionalization as a hybrid, non-linear system, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 reconceptualizes Tseng's foundational framework by reconfiguring its core dimensions—competence, education and training, professional associations, and ethical institutionalization—as concurrently operating components rather than sequential stages. These dimensions are continuously mediated by three cross-cutting mechanisms: technological mediation, ethical sustainability, and global governance. Together, they form a cyclical and interactive process through which translation professionalization is dynamically shaped across different sociopolitical and technological contexts.



[Figure 2] A Hybrid Model of Translation Professionalization

4.1. Implications for Translation Education and Competence Development

One major implication of the proposed hybrid model concerns the transformation of translation education. While Tseng emphasized formal education as a critical stage in professionalization, the present analysis suggests that education is no longer a discrete phase preceding professional practice. Instead, education functions as a lifelong and adaptive process that continuously responds to technological change, market demands, and ethical challenges.

In AI-mediated translation environments, professional competence extends beyond linguistic proficiency to include technological literacy, data awareness, and critical judgment regarding machine-assisted workflows. Translation curricula must therefore integrate AI literacy, human-machine interaction, and data ethics alongside traditional training in translation theory and practice. This shift reframes competence not as a stable endpoint but as a continually evolving capacity shaped by professional context. The hybrid model thus positions education as a recursive mechanism that both informs and is reshaped by technological mediation and ethical sustainability.

4.2. Implications for Professional Associations and Institutional Legitimacy

The hybrid model also underscores the changing role of professional associations in sustaining translation professionalization. In Tseng's original framework, associations emerge after education to consolidate professional norms and institutional recognition. However, in contemporary transnational translation markets, professional associations increasingly operate across national boundaries and interact with global regulatory regimes.

Organizations such as FIT and ISO now participate in the development of international standards, ethical guidelines, and certification frameworks that transcend individual states. This shift reflects the growing importance of global governance mechanisms, including the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, which indirectly shape translation practice through regulations on data use, algorithmic accountability, and professional responsibility. Within the hybrid model, professional associations function not merely as gatekeepers of entry but as mediators between local professional communities and global regulatory environments, reinforcing professional legitimacy through ongoing institutional adaptation.

4.3. Ethical Sustainability in AI-Mediated Translation Practice

A central contribution of the hybrid model lies in its reconceptualization of ethical institutionalization as ethical sustainability. Rather than treating ethics as a final stage of professionalization, ethical sustainability emphasizes continuous ethical negotiation in response to evolving technological and social conditions. AI-driven translation tools raise pressing ethical concerns related to data ownership, confidentiality, labor displacement, and linguistic diversity, which cannot be resolved through static codes of ethics alone.

Ethical sustainability therefore requires mechanisms for reflexive monitoring, professional accountability, and inclusive representation within the profession. This perspective aligns with emerging discussions on responsible AI and socially sustainable professional practice, positioning translators as ethical agents who balance efficiency with cultural and social responsibility. By embedding ethics throughout the professionalization process, the hybrid model addresses the limitations

of linear ethical institutionalization in explaining contemporary translation realities.

4.4. Global and Regional Implications: Malaysia and Korea Revisited

Finally, the hybrid model provides an analytical lens for understanding regional variations in translation professionalization, as illustrated by the cases of Malaysia and Korea. While both contexts demonstrate elements of Tseng's core dimensions, their professionalization trajectories differ due to variations in language policy, market size, educational infrastructure, and levels of digital adoption.

In Korea, strong state involvement in language policy and higher levels of technological integration have accelerated the institutionalization of professional standards, while in Malaysia, multilingual governance and market-driven dynamics have produced more pluralized professional pathways. These differences suggest that professionalization does not unfold uniformly but is shaped by the interaction between local conditions and global mechanisms. The hybrid model accommodates such diversity by conceptualizing professionalization as a context-sensitive process, allowing Tseng's framework to remain analytically useful without imposing a rigid developmental sequence.

5. Conclusion

This study revisits Tseng's (1992) model of translation professionalization to examine its relevance and limitations in the context of globalization, artificial intelligence, and transnational governance. While Tseng's framework remains a valuable sociological foundation for understanding how translation has sought professional legitimacy, its original linear structure is insufficient to account for the complexity of contemporary translation ecosystems. By reconceptualizing professionalization as a non-linear, cyclical, and hybrid process, this article extends Tseng's model without discarding its core analytical insights.

The proposed hybrid model demonstrates that translation professionalization today is shaped by the continuous interaction among competence development, education and training, professional associations, and ethical institutionalization, all of which are mediated by technological innovation, ethical sustainability, and

global governance. This perspective clarifies that professionalization is not a completed endpoint but an ongoing process of negotiation across institutional, technological, and moral domains. In this sense, the translator's professional identity emerges as both context-dependent and globally interconnected.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that government agencies and regulatory bodies should move beyond narrowly defined certification schemes and consider flexible, competency-based frameworks that recognize AI literacy, ethical accountability, and continuous professional development as core professional requirements. The growing influence of transnational regulations—such as the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act—further highlights the need for alignment between national language policies and global governance structures in shaping professional standards for translators.

For professional associations, the hybrid model underscores the importance of expanding traditional roles related to accreditation and advocacy toward active engagement in ethical governance, technology assessment, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Associations are increasingly positioned as mediators between local professional communities and global regulatory regimes, with responsibility for safeguarding both professional integrity and social trust.

Finally, this study contributes to translation studies by situating professionalization within broader sociological debates on platform labor, technological mediation, and sustainability. By reframing Tseng's model as a dynamic and adaptive framework, the article offers a theoretically grounded yet forward-looking approach to understanding translation as a socially responsible and resilient profession in the twenty-first century. Future research may further operationalize the proposed model through empirical investigation, comparative policy analysis, and longitudinal studies of AI-mediated translation practice.

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