

Transcreation Code of Practice

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This Code of Practice functions as a set of guidelines for professionals specialising (or would like to specialise) in the transcreation of advertising/marketing content, companies that provide transcreation services, and any company/individual who would like to use transcreation services.

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The purpose of this Code

Why it matters

This Code is created for the benefits of all parties involved in the transcreation of advertising/marketing content.

For practitioners, it lays out what transcreation is especially for newcomers, and it acts as a supporting statement for all professionals to negotiate better working conditions given the limited understanding of the knowledge, time and effort required for this line of work in general.

For transcreation companies, the Code serves as a set of industry standards with the intention of protecting responsible companies and discouraging those without the required due diligence and resources for transcreation work to enter the market.

For clients, the Code functions as an essential guide on what to look out for and how to make the most of using transcreation services, and how to avoid the risks to one's brand due to the misuse of transcreation services.

Who it is for

This Code of Practice functions as a set of guidelines for professionals specialising (or would like to specialise) in the transcreation of advertising/marketing content, companies that provide transcreation services, and any company/individual who would like to use transcreation services.

This Code thus does not provide guidance on transcreation of other genres, e.g., literary texts, elements without the intent to promote or persuade in audio-visual texts and video game localisation.

This Code may also provide information for academics and students interested in transcreation.

This Code is not a training material. If you seek training opportunities regarding transcreation, please see section 9 below.

Definition of transcreation

Transcreation of advertising/marketing content (hereafter “transcreation” for easy reference) is the professional practice that combines translation, copywriting and intercultural consultancy¹; it usually, but not always, involves adaptation. This combination means transcreation requires intercultural awareness, interlinguistic skills, marketing acumen and more. It can be referred to as a process or a product.

For a more general definition of transcreation, please see Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo (2023, p.358)².

As a process

Transcreation is the process of taking an agreed brief, including the source copy and other brand- and company-related documents, and producing at least one transcreation option to maximise the appeal to and the impact on the target audience.

¹ The focus here is on the active consultant role required of the transcreators and the transcreation agency, as compared to the intercultural awareness of translators.

² Díaz-Millón, M. and Olvera-Lobo, M. D. (2023) 'Towards a definition of transcreation: a systematic literature review', *Perspectives*, 31(2), pp. 347–364. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0907676X.2021.2004177>.

This general definition refers transcreation as a type of translation, while this Code of Practice acknowledges transcreation as a translation-related activity rather than a type of translation because transcreation of advertising/marketing content is a combination of translation and other activities as indicated in the definition in the main text above.

As a product

Transcreation is the product i.e. the target copy of one or more options resulting from the above process.

Pricing

The pricing of transcreation is like that of copywriting and usually higher than that of the more traditional kinds of translation. Transcreation work is usually paid:

- by the project, in a flat fee. In this case, a fixed number of versions, or a clear list of deliverables, is agreed, including also the back translation and the rationale of each version, the number of feedback rounds and further edits, meetings, etc.
- by the hour, based on the actual time spent, or an upfront mutual estimate of hours. A retainer is sometimes agreed upon, especially if there will be ongoing collaborations.
- by the day, based on an upfront mutual estimate of days required.
- transcreation is **never** paid per word.

Workflow

A workflow model that is known and respected by all parties ensures quality outcomes. While workflow steps in real practice vary, the following workflow model suggests good practice and should be observed by all parties. Transcreation is a collaborative effort that requires input from both the client and the transcreator (e.g. a translator, a copywriter, or other marketing/language professional) or the transcreation agency. The more detailed the brief agreed with the client, the smoother the process and the better the outcome.

Step 1 – Create and agree on a brief (the client and the transcreator or the transcreation agency)

A clear and detailed brief is the point of departure. No transcreation can be started without one.

- The client³: submits information about their brand, campaign objectives, the master copy (including visuals), the profile of the target audience, preferred tone and register (aka tone-of-voice or TOV), formats of the final product, restrictions to be considered, etc.
- The transcreator⁴ or the transcreation agency: perform a cross-cultural audit (“CCA” or cultural consultation). Assess the cultural fit of the campaign and the master copy to the target market. Identify and alert the client of potential issues e.g. possible reputational damage to the brand, any cultural element that does not work for the target market.
- Both parties meet to discuss the market potential and challenges, agree to the terms and conditions, including how much room for creativity, the level of difficulty to address any potential issues identified in the cross-cultural audit, suggestions to tweak or re-create the campaign, the number of options, the

³ The client can be any party requires transcreation services, including the original company (i.e. without any intermediaries), the creative agency that represents them e.g. advertising agency that create the master copy, transcreation/translation agency, video production company, or any individual who provides a brief.

⁴ Depending on the scale, timeframe and budget of the project, sometimes there will be more than one transcreator working for the same project.

number of feedback rounds, budget and deadline. The client's in-region representative should be present in this meeting.

- Both parties create and agree a brief based on the above information, as detailed as possible. The client includes any further relevant materials and signs off the brief.

Aspects for consideration	Notes
The product/service to be advertised	its features and benefits, points of parity (PoPs) and points of difference (PoDs)
The brand	Mission Vision Purpose
The brand's tone of voice (TOV)	The brand's personality How it "speaks" to consumers Is the TOV suitable for the target audience and market?
The purpose of the campaign	To boost sales? Or to call for other actions? To launch a new product/service? To raise brand awareness? Or to raise awareness of a cause? Other purposes?
Target audience	Where applicable... Gender and sexuality Age Education level Profession (e.g. a pharmaceutical ad for healthcare professionals) Ethnicity and Race Geographic location (e.g. Spanish speakers in Europe and Latin America) Communities (e.g. minorities, marginalised groups) Values and beliefs
Media	Print, digital billboard, subtitles, banners and captions on social media, etc.? If a video ad, on TV channels (usually synchronous) or online (usually asynchronous, YouTube, Facebook, etc.)?

Example of a transcreation brief (Benetello, 2024, p.178, with slight additions suggested by other contributors)

Step 2 – Gather and analyse information (the transcreator or the transcreation agency)

- Study carefully the brief and any other client provided materials. Collect ideas in terms of terminology, phrasing, consumer quotes from reviews, preferences on the types, styles and ways of presentation of visuals, etc.
- Examine the master copy for meaning, tone, and possible constraints, as compared to the result of the above research
- Review all elements that go into the target copy, e.g., written/audible texts, music, sound effects; are they interdependent?
- Consider all denotative and connotative meanings

Step 3 – Produce (the transcreator)

- Brainstorm as many options as possible without judgement
- Shortlist the strongest options based on the brief (Step 1) and the analysis (Step 2).
- Refine and edit using copywriting skills until the results are desirable and presentable to the client
- Provide back translation and rationales for each submitted option. For texts longer than straplines, back translation is usually provided where the target text deviates from the source text.
- Send them off to the clients

Step 4 – Feedback (the client) and amend (the transcreator)

- The client offers feedback on the transcreation options. Changes may be requested, and it is part of the process. The transcreator needs to be prepared to make changes as the client instructed (or reject the client's request and justify the option if an option needs to be defended). The number of feedback rounds, i.e. how many times the client can suggest changes, is agreed in the brief and included in the budget. The common practice is two rounds.
- If a transcreation agency is involved i.e. the transcreator does not deal with the client directly, there will be an internal quality assurance procedure, where the agency usually has its own evaluation grid/system to assess the quality of the options. The transcreator may receive feedback before the work reaches the client.
- Clients do not always give feedback or let the transcreator know which option they choose. In this case, the transcreator can only know when the option is publicised.

Step 5 – Finalise (the transcreator) and sign off (the client)

- The transcreator implements all the requested changes and submits the final version. The client signs off.

Step 6 – The transcreator keeps a record for future reference (where permitted by the agreement with the client and any applicable NDA)

- Request the final signed-off version from the client for records. Keep all files in the process, including all discussions and outcomes, terminology and phrasing preferences, dos and don'ts, etc., for future reference.
- Please be aware that while it is useful to keep records of transcreation work, what can be kept, how, and how long it can be kept can be restricted by the contractual agreement between the transcreator and the client. Please double-check.

The above workflow is based on Sattler-Hovdar (2026, 2019, 2016)⁵, Benetello (2024)⁶, and suggestions from other contributors in the industry (see *Acknowledgements*). There are other transcreation workflows. For example, Carreira (2024) offers an easy-to-understand overview of the transcreation workflow and includes a broader picture of how transcreation fits into the workflow of an international advertising campaign. Similarly, Pedersen's study at a marketing implementation agency in London gives a simple workflow example (Example 1, 2017, p.51).

⁵ See [CPD resources on transcreation](#) on the ITI website

⁶ Benetello, C. (2024). "From Briefing to Voiceover Direction: The Transcreation Workflow in a Practitioner's Experience." In: Kostopoulou, L., Charalampidou, P. (eds) *New Perspectives in Media Translation*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-62832-0_7

Challenges and possible solutions

Limited understanding of transcreation

This is the top reason why transcreation is not valued as it deserves. Most clients, some translators and language service providers show limited understanding of transcreation.

Clients

Most clients would think transcreation is to translate a few words while keeping the same visuals. This can lead to mediocre or even offensive copy for the local market, where not only is the campaign's objective not met and the ultimate goal of market expansion not achieved, but also the unbearable risk of damage to brand reputation. Some visuals in the original copy may be appealing for the local market, others not. In both cases, it takes not only language skills to understand the underlying message in the original, but also copywriting skills, cultural sensitivity and local market understanding to deliver the message effectively. The skills, time and effort required are more than just translation or copywriting alone.

Translators

Not all translators can provide transcreation services, because the attributes of being a copywriter and knowledge of advertising (on top of knowing both cultures, like all translators) are also required. Translators who wish to venture into this field should not only have an acute cultural awareness of both markets, but should also get training in advertising and copywriting, and keep themselves up to date with the development of the local market. Like the provision of other specialised services, translators should refrain from taking on transcreation jobs if they do not have the profile required, as it can affect the working conditions of qualified transcreators.

Language service providers / companies

Transcreation is often marketed as a premium service and charges more than the more traditional forms of translation. Seeing this as a great business opportunity, many language service providers and production companies without a true understanding of transcreation and qualified copywriters in their talent pool also enter the market; transcreation is sometimes marketed as an add-on. Consequently, clients have been reverting to translation methods, asking for quotes per word rather than basing budgets on the complexity of the work at hand. This kind of practice has put a squeeze on truly professional transcreators.

Possible solution: disseminate this Code of Practice as widely as possible, so all parties involved in transcreation would have similar expectations of what they pay for, work on or offer.

Subjectivity

Evaluating transcreation quality is subjective. The transcreator's work is judged by everyone in the process, e.g., the quality assurance team of the agency, the clients, or even another transcreator (sometimes bigger projects can have more than one transcreator and/or reviewer). More often than not, clients prefer the safer choice that matches brand consistency and the source copy rather than taking a leap of faith and opting for the most appealing version to the local market.

Possible solutions: transcreators and/or the transcreation agency need to be prepared to justify and explain the suggested option(s), ask follow-up questions, and highlight all potential risks. It is recommended to always offer at least two options: one bolder and the other safer. Transcreators and the transcreation agency also need to respect that the clients have the final say. Sometimes the transcreator would not know the decision of the option until that option is publicised.

In essence, clarity at the outset and trust-building are key. When clients are well-informed about the transcreation workflow and how the proposed transcreation options created from this workflow can get them

from where they are to where they want to be, all parties can benefit from a smoother process that produces the best result.

Possible constraints from the source copy

The source copy has visual and/or space constraints. These constraints can be imposed due to limited budget, the lack of consideration of whether the original visual is appealing to the local market, whether the space available is realistic for the target language, or other factors. Achieving the same effect for the local market becomes challenging, and the result can be compromised.

Possible solution: The key to a successful transcreation is to achieve the maximum level of intended impact on the target audience/market. Clients need to understand that while a close rendition of the source copy is sometimes possible to achieve this goal, transcreation involves varying degrees of adaptation or even a complete rewrite.

Inadequate brief

A detailed brief is paramount to the start of the transcreation process. In reality, due to clients' lack of understanding of the transcreation workflow and the importance of a detailed brief to the end result, briefs often do not exist or are inadequate. This means transcreators and the transcreation agency would need to guess the thinking that went before, which is time-consuming, and the guesses may not always be right, resulting in not-so-effective transcreations.

Possible solution: clients need to understand that transcreation is a two-way street. The best transcreation can only come about when information about the brand, the message, etc., is provided (see an example of a transcreation brief in Step 1 in Section 5).

Limited time and budget

Again, due to clients' lack of understanding of the transcreation workflow, the time and effort that go into such a complex task, as compared to the time and budget proposed, are often unrealistic.

Possible solution: clients can refer to this Code of Practice to better understand the transcreation workflow and need to understand that 1) both the original campaign and transcreation involve a great deal of creativity, and creativity takes time. If transcreation is rushed, the Return on Investment (ROI) from the ideation phase of the original campaign can be compromised. 2) transcreation requires both the skills of translation and copywriting and should be paid as such.

Artificial intelligence

The rise of AI catalyses the commoditisation of transcreation. Generally, without a clear understanding of what AI can or cannot do, clients increasingly use AI-powered translation platforms for creative content, asking human transcreators/translators to review. The problems with this practice are manifold and covered in Section 6 below.

Why GenAI is not useful for transcreation work

Unfortunately, generative AI has already taken a fair share of the transcreation market due to the lack of understanding between what AI and humans can do, and the ever-present demand to cut costs. However, AI is not useful for transcreation work because of the following.

AI does not have the human skills required in transcreation work

To produce a transcreation that resonates with the local market, it requires the ability to:

1. Translate beyond interlingual transfer and considers all modes: visual and verbal, as well as non-visual and non-verbal
2. Understand both the source and the target cultures and markets
3. Understand all the implications of the master copy, cultural references, emotions including humour, etc.
4. Interact with the clients e.g. discuss, ask the right questions, to figure out what the clients want and how to get there
5. Offer tailored client guidance according to each transcreation case
6. Decide the degree of adaptation according to each transcreation case, ranging from a close rendition of the source copy to different degrees of adaptation to a complete rewrite
7. Copywrite to appeal and connect emotionally to the target market
8. Judge which transcreation option will make the target audience feel what it needs to
9. Sustain coherence across interconnected elements, e.g., ensure the brand strapline, the campaign slogan, and any long form transcreation are coherent and align with the same brief

Transcreation evokes feeling and changes thinking. AI cannot perform any of the above, simply because AI cannot perceive, think nor feel. It makes no sense to ask a machine to create a feeling when they cannot feel it in the first place.

Confidentiality

Since transcreation involves sensitive commercial data, confidentiality is a key concern. Transcreators usually sign Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) so they cannot feed clients' confidential information into AI.⁷ If clients are willing, they also risk their confidential data being published and reused, given major AI companies have reportedly been proven to breach their own user agreements (see this [IBM report](#) for example). Without the same contextual information about the company, the brand, the campaign, etc., that human transcreators have access to, the output of AI's "blind transcreation" will not be as good as human transcreation.

AI is unreliable

AI is unreliable on many fronts:

- Due to the confidentiality issue mentioned above, if AI transcreates "blindly" (in a vacuum), the output will not be reliable in terms of attracting customers.
- AI hallucinates and self-trains on its own mistakes and non-curated content; see this [Science article](#) for example.
- AI can endorse harmful and delusional content because AI tends to be sycophantic i.e. agreeing with humans and seeking human approval rather than improving the responses objectively; see this [Institute for Technology Law and Policy article](#) for example.

⁷ For transcreation agencies that have a paid or self-developed AI platform, the client needs to be briefed on the data protection policy i.e. how their data is stored and used, any non-disclosure and non-retention agreement so the data will not be used to train the AI platform.

- AI prompts are gender- and racially biased. AI produces different results depending on the gender and race of the user; see this [Landmark College article](#) for example.
- Linguistic exchange at a base level i.e. phrase A equates to phrase B, etc. is heavily predicated upon the statistical frequency of 'match' - any client wanting to create 'net-new' copy or give birth to new phrasing or idiomatic construction will find AI-derived content a fundamental mismatch due to linguistic and cultural dissonance.
- In heavily regulated sectors/markets e.g. advertising for financial products or alcohol in France, the resources AI can train on are very limited, thus it yields poor results that do not align with the brief and comply with legal restrictions in the given verbal-visual context.
- No quality assurance: AI cannot discern if the copy (it generates or is created by a human) misaligns with the brief, is offensive to the target culture, or violates any legal restrictions of the local market.
- Practitioners have commented that even when AI is allowed and fed all necessary information, if the output is in languages other than English, it tends to read like machine translation.

AI infringes Intellectual Property (IP)

AI trains on copyrighted content which infringes IP and privacy rights. This creates at least three issues:

- 1) Companies which use AI-generated content can be sued for IP infringement.
- 2) AI-generated content cannot be trademarked. Companies which use AI-generated content would not stand out in the market as other companies can use the same AI-generated content.
- 3) AI holds no accountability. Companies which use AI-generated content are liable for any damage to their own brand and customers. Given that AI-generated content is unreliable, companies put themselves at great risk by using AI-generated content.

AI does not create (nothing new)

AI does not create, but generates content based on the data it is fed to. What AI produces is a probabilistic combination of existing information. It contradicts the essence of transcreation: creativity and originality.

AI-generated content is not the most appealing/impactful copy for the target market

AI may be able to use terms that are most searched in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to create potential "hits" in the target market, but AI's embedding of SEO terms often sounds unnatural, i.e., not the most appealing/impactful copy for the target market.

AI reduces human creativity

AI output can generate bias and interfere with and ultimately reduce the capacity of human creative thinking.

Attributes

General attributes in all translation-related work

- Linguistic skills: proficiency in two or more languages
- Intercultural awareness
- Accountability for one's own work
- Negotiation skills
- Technological awareness: understanding of the efficiency, limitations and ethical implications of using any technological tools, including AI

Attributes specific to transcreation work

- Copywriting skills
- Awareness of both markets
- Brand and marketing knowledge, both theory and practice
- Explanation skills: explaining in detail that crafting equally successful local content also takes time and money; it is not an afterthought. Offering clear back translation and rationales for transcreation options
- Trust building: working in ways that show the transcreator is the expert and the creation aligns with what the client seeks, to minimise the number of feedback rounds
- Collaborative skills: working in a team, liaising with different parties
- Consulting skills: offering problem-solving and guidance to get where the client would like to be
- Analytical skills: analysing gathered information, the nuance of the master copy and its implications for the local market, deciding what needs to be changed, or if rewriting is needed

Acknowledgement

This Code of Practice is authored by [Dr Mavis Ho](#), Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh, based on an ITI members' survey conducted between October 2024 and April 2025, and questionnaires and discussions from focus group meetings with academics, transcreators and transcreation companies conducted between January and September 2025, with collaborators (in alphabetical order of last names) as follows:

- Catherine Barr: Director, [franklyfluent](#)
- Claudia Benetello: Italian communications all-rounder, [Dropinka](#)
- Dr Oliver Carreira: Independent Researcher and Transcreation Specialist
- Mélanie Chevalier: Founder and Chief Culturalist, [Creative Culture](#)
- [Nieves Gamonal Simón](#): Copywriter, Transcreation Expert and Educator
- Rik Grant: Global Head of Language and Cultural Services, [Tag](#)
- Christine Imad: Language Service Manager, [Prose on Pixels](#)
- [Franck Manara](#), Copywriter, Transcreation Expert and Educator
- Nina Sattler-Hovdar: Transcreator, Consultant, Trainer and Author of multiple transcreation books
- Associate Professor Ira Torresi: University of Bologna
- [Professor Cristina Valdés](#): University of Oviedo

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References other than those in the footnotes

- [*Transcreation. The All-in-one Handbook and Workbook*](#) (2026); [*Get Fit for the Future of Transcreation: A Handbook on how to Succeed in an Undervalued Market*](#) (2019); and [*Translation – Transkreation*](#) (in German, 2016), all by Nina Sattler-Hovdar
- [*Dropinka Deck for Transcreation*](#) by Claudia Benetello (2024)
- [“Transcreation: Beyond translation and advertising” in the *Handbook of the Language Industry: Contexts, Resources and Profiles*](#) (2024) by Dr Oliver Carreira and [“What are the skills required for transcreators’ training?” A review-based curricular proposal in *New Perspectives in Media Translation: Transcreation in the Digital Age*](#) by Dr Carla Botella Tejera and Dr Oliver Carreira (both 2024)
- [*Appraisal and the Transcreation of Marketing Texts*](#) by Dr Mavis Ho (2024)