

BOURDIEU'S "RULES OF THE GAME": AN INTROSPECTION INTO METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS OF TRANSLATION SOCIOLOGY

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RESUMO

Durante os dez últimos anos, a disciplina „Estudos da Tradução“ se tornou, sem dúvida, um ramo específico e reconhecido para a comunidade científica. Isso se comprova através da discussão sobre „direções“ ou „mudanças paradigmáticas“ que aparecem como tema recorrente de várias publicações. Junto a essas mudanças, encontramos uma crescente preocupação com questões sobre „o social“ na tradução que discutem não somente as redes dos agentes e as agências e suas relações de poder, mas também as práticas discursivo-sociais que moldam o processo da tradução e que afetam decisivamente as estratégias de um texto a ser traduzido.

Em tal contexto, o presente artigo procura discutir a teoria de Pierre Bourdieu sobre as formas simbólicas, em sua aplicação à edição da tradução. Aqui serão particularmente considerados os termos-chave da teoria de Bourdieu (*capital e habitus*) e sua função na reconstrução de um „campo da tradução“. Nos últimos anos, muitos trabalhos se basearam na teoria analítica de Bourdieu, a fim compreender melhor, e numa perspectiva mais abrangente, o funcionamento do processo de tradução, em sua relevância social, incluindo as funções operacionais do ajuste social em que uma tradução surge. Basicamente, este artigo é uma rápida descrição da „Sociologia da Tradução“.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: sociologia da tradução, paradigma cultural, Pierre Bourdieu, metodologia

The discussion of a scientific discipline's shifts of paradigm might be seen as a sign of its establishment within the scientific community and a stage in the scientific branch's "evolution" which allows for questioning its results and conquests also from outside. Recently, this question has been asked by various Translation Studies scholars, among which by Mary Snell-Hornby in her volume *The Turns of Translation Studies. New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (SNELL-HORNBY, 2006). A shift of paradigm or "turn" undoubtedly designates – up to a certain degree – a break-up with traditional views on a certain subject, in this case on translation in the widest sense, and the introduction of new perspectives which of course not necessarily discard once and for all long-lasting perceptions, but take established approaches as a basis for both a starting point for sketching new horizons and further developments in a specific area. Against this background, what has been called "the social" in translation, has taken ground over the last few years and has stimulated a range of publications which try to conceptualise a "translation sociology" (see especially GOUANVIC, 1999; WOLF, 2006). This paper will try to emphasize the methodological framing of a "Translation Sociology", where I shall especially focus on the contributions which draw on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of symbolic forms.

1. From the "cultural" to the "social"

The "cultural turn" is without doubt the most decisive turning point Translation Studies has taken since its rise in the Sixties of the twentieth century. All major approaches, in one way or another, had taken into consideration cultural factors in translation – be it the linguistic ones (see NIDA, 1964), the functional ones (see VERMEER, 1986) or the descriptive ones (see TOURY, 1995). But none of them had extensively focused on the implications the text's surroundings would have on the text production, and the "outdoor" factors which shape the translation's deeper impact were hardly discussed. In 1990, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere took a decisive move when they stated:

There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed.

[...] [T]ranslation as an activity is always doubly contextualized, since the text has a place in two cultures (BASSNETT/LEFEVERE, 1990, p.11).

Translations thus always reflect the historical and cultural conditions under which they have been produced. This also means that the object of study since then has been redefined: what is studied is basically the "text embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs" (ibid., p.12). This broadened perspective opened up new methodologies which were developed to shed light on the translation process revealing the power relations underlying any translation activity and therefore pointing to the fact that translation can never be neutral (see BASSNETT, 1998, p.136). Additionally, new approaches to translation studies were given a boost, often in a common interdisciplinary effort to widen the discipline's horizon. As a consequence, the years that followed saw an enormous increase and refinement in publications on feminist translation, postcolonial translation and ethnographic approaches, among others.

The insights gained from this newly developed perspective showed, however, that an important feature of the translation process had been not totally ignored, but widely neglected by then: the view of translation as a social practice and consequently the role of translators and other persons involved in the translation process as social agents. Gradually, in the wake of the results gained through research on cultural issues conditioning the translation phenomenon, the conviction took shape, that any translation is necessarily bound up within social contexts: on the one hand, the act of translating, in all its various stages is undeniably carried out by individuals who belong to a social system; on the other hand, the translation phenomenon is inevitably implicated in social institutions, which greatly determine the selection, production and distribution of translation, and as a result the strategies adopted in the translation itself.

What is at stake, therefore, are the various agencies and agents involved in any translation procedure, and more specifically the textual factors operating in the translation process. The interrelational and interactive character of these factors is fundamental to the understanding of their functioning, and makes up the view of translation as a "socially regulated activity" (HERMANS, 1997, p.10). In this context, the analysis of the social implications of translation helps us

to identify the translator and the translation researcher as a constructing and constructed subject in society. The question of “the social” within translation had been dealt with throughout the history of translation studies in various forms and under varying perspectives. Although it has been recognized that the translation process is socially conditioned and that “the viability of a translation is established by its relationship to the cultural and social conditions under which it is produced and read” (VENUTI, 1995, p.18), the methodological framework developed in the discipline to convincingly describe the social implications of translation in its various forms and profiles seems still missing. In the last few years, however, some translation studies scholars have repeatedly drawn on the works of – especially – French sociologists, thus sketching the outlines of what could be labelled a “translation sociology”. In what follows, I shall concentrate on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic forms, though without diminishing the importance of other methodological contributions stemming from the discipline of sociology.

2. Bourdieu and the “rules of the (translation) game”

Bourdieu’s key concepts, which form the basis of his sociology of culture, are *field*, *capital* and *habitus*. The notion of *field* refers to a social arena within which struggles and manoeuvres take place over specific resources and access to them. It denominates the objective, external structure which is independent from the will and the awareness of the social agents. Fields are defined by the resources which are at stake – cultural goods, housing, intellectual distinction, that is for example education, employment, land, power, social class, or prestige. A field, therefore, is a structured system of social positions occupied by individuals and institutions, the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. A field is also a system of forces, which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations (JENKINS, 1992, p.84-85). Inside the social fields, the agents struggle for the maintenance or change of power relations (BOURDIEU, 1985, p.74) on the basis of the various types of *capital* they have: economic capital, cultural capital such as education or

professional position, social capital, and symbolic capital such as prestige or social honour, to name just a few types.

According to Bourdieu, the functioning of every field is determined by four principles: the constitution of the field as autonomous field of practice, the order in the field as hierarchical structure, the struggle in the field as its self-dynamics, and the reproduction of the field as a condition for its social endurance (PAPILLOU, 2003, p.9). To start with, the autonomy of the field is created through the gradual independence from external constraints such as moral censorship, aesthetic programmes or political forces which tend to use cultural production as propaganda. Subsequently, the autonomous principle is determined by the degree of specific consecration, for instance literary or artistic prestige. The order in the field, on the other hand, corresponds to the structure of the power relations between agents operating in the field. Power manifests itself primarily in the permanent struggle between the principles of hierarchization, that is the heteronomous principle, referred to by those who dominate the field in terms of politics and economics, and the autonomous principle, which is defined through the independence from the political and economic agenda (JURT, 1995, p.90). As a result, every field is determined through forces of competition which strive for modification or conservation of the power relations. In order to occupy dominant positions in the field, it is necessary to invest various forms of capitals. The struggle for recognition is an additional factor responsible for the dynamics in the field and assumes a paramount role especially in view of the autonomous status of the field, when therefore an external recognition through the market is not required. The fourth functioning principle, the reproduction of the field, is probably the most fruitful for our discussion. The dynamics as well as the continuance of the field primarily result from the gradual substitution of the dominant agents and institutions through other agents and institutions previously dominated by them, and who now step by step occupy the dominant positions in the field. The reproduction of the field on behalf of the struggle of its agents therefore does not consist in the exact reproduction of its elements, but of its order (BOURDIEU, 1983, p.319-321).

The position of the various agents and institutions in the field is made up by the interplay of their capitals and of their *habitus*, another

key term of Bourdieu's social theory. Both categories never act in an intentional way and are therefore far from being deterministic: capitals differ according to the forces at stake, and *habitus* involves a creative dimension which contradicts determinism:

[W]hen I say habitus, I mean that we act according to *dispositions* [...], that is, a durable and transposable set of principles of perception, appreciation, and action, capable of generating practices and representations that are (usually) adapted to the situation [...] without being the product of an intentional search for adaptation (BOURDIEU, 1991, p. 29, emphasis by P.B.).

Habitus is far more than behavior or a role acquired through socialization – it is constructed through experience and is constantly produced or re-produced on the basis of the subject's activities, which mould its character and condition the *habitus'* adaptation to new situations (KRAIS/GEBAUER, 2002, p.30). The classifications and distinctive principles as well as the patterns for assessment inherent in the *habitus* are reflected in the practices of various lifestyles. Mediated through the *habitus*, goods such as apartments, books, cars, titles, travels etc. are transformed in “distinct and distinctive signs”, and “continuous distributions” become “discontinuous differences” (BOURDIEU, 1982, p.284). Various practices, opinions and so forth, obtain their “social sense” by showing their distinctiveness and affiliation to one specific social group. This, of course, is also reflected in the subject's practices as manifested in his or her labor activities. In our context, the translator's work is continuously shaped by his or her striving for distinctiveness.

According to Bourdieu, changes in the field (he describes this process as “history of the field”) come about as a result of the struggle between the established figures and the young challengers. Authors, schools, categories of thought etc. fight to persist, but never mechanically or chronologically slide into the past. The struggle is set in motion through changes in the distribution of the agents' various capitals which are at stake in the field and which encounter with particular agents' dispositions, this is their *habitus*. Thus, the agents dominating the field of production and the market through the various forms of capital they have been able to accumulate in earlier struggles, are at odds with the newcomers, who, on their turn, stand for discontinuity, rupture and subversion. These strategies are opposed to those of the agents in dominant positions, who operate essentially

defensive strategies, designed to perpetuate the status quo by maintaining themselves and the principles on which their dominance is based (BOURDIEU, 1980, p.269).

3. "Playing" with Bourdieu in Translation Studies

In Translation Studies, Bourdieu's analytical tools have been adopted in a series of works, mainly with the aim to reconstruct a certain "translation field" or to better understand the functioning of translation processes in their wider perspective, including the operational functions of the social setting in which a translation is shaped. The following examples will demonstrate some of these adoptions and will try to deliver the major insights drawn from these analyses.

Jean-Marc Gouanvic was one of the first translation studies scholars who drew on Bourdieusian concepts in order to shed light on the agents' activities in the translation field. Moreover, he is convinced that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural action can be widely applied to translation studies as it is a "sociology of the text as a production in the process of being carried out, of the product itself and of its consumption in the social fields, the whole seen in a relational manner" (GOUANVIC, 2005, p.148). In his various studies on the import of US-American science fiction literature into France between 1945 and 1960, (see e.g. GOUANVIC, 1997; 1999) he claims that a translation is basically exposed to the same logics as the original and that, in the case of his empirical studies, the stakes (*enjeux*) of the agents involved (critics, editors, publishers, translators) enabled to establish a new literary field of science fiction in France. This field was created as a sort of compromise between the US-American (field) structures and part of the corresponding French tradition. Gouanvic explores, in detail, the power struggles in the field conditioned by the differing interests of the various social agents, and their impact on the make-up of the translations. He also takes into consideration the mechanisms of legitimation to which the social groups are exposed in the course of their struggle for symbolic, economic and political power.

For Gouanvic, there is an aesthetic pleasure in playing this "game", which Bourdieu calls *illusio*. *Illusio* is viewed as the object of

the translator's task. During the translation process, a (literary) text reinvents the specific rules of the literary genre to which it belongs, and subsequently is reinterpreted, according to its own logic, by the agents involved (GOUANVIC, 2005, p.163). Gouanvic claims that adept readers adhere to the *illusio* concept and the specific stakes in the field by internalising them for the duration of the reading (ibid., p.164). He stresses that the principle of *illusio* is primarily actualised through the agents' *habitus*. During the translation procedure, the act of translating is incorporated through, and at the same time influenced by, the translator's *habitus*, which can be identified through the reconstruction of the translator's social trajectory. Gouanvic distinguishes between the translator's *habitus* as a result of his or her practice, and a specific *habitus* which is constructed while the cultures involved encounter one another during the transfer process. Consequently, translation strategies, according to Gouanvic, are generally not to be understood as deliberate choices conforming to or breaking norms, but rather as the translator's *habitus*, which, together with that of other agents, structures the respective field and, conversely, is structured by the field itself (ibid., p.157-158).

In his regularly quoted article "The Pivotal Status of the Translator's Habitus" (SIMEONI, 1998) Daniel Simeoni gives the notion of *habitus* another role. The author claims that over the centuries the translatorial *habitus* has contributed to the internalisation of a submissive behaviour, thus generating a low social prestige for translators. As a result of the continuous historically conditioned acceptance of norms on behalf of translators, Simeoni argues that the translators' willingness to accept these norms had a decisive impact on the secondariness of their activity as such (ibid., p.6). He stresses the decisive role of this internalised position in the "field of translation" and tries to integrate the category of the translatorial *habitus* into systemic translation models, not least by reframing Toury's concept of norms "on the assumption of a translating habitus understood as: (culturally) pre-structured and structuring agent mediating cultural artefacts in the course of transfer" (ibid., p.1). Ultimately, a *habitus*-led consideration of the translation practice would foster finer-grain analyses of the "socio-cognitive emergence of translating skills and their outcome".

The question of the translator's alleged subservience is also

discussed by Moira Inghilleri. On the basis of Bourdieu's concepts field and *habitus*, as well as of Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, Inghilleri elaborates a theoretical concept for the analysis of community interpreting as a norm driven activity (INGHILLERI, 2003). With such a concept Inghilleri not only proposes to reveal the constructivist nature of norms, but also intends to analyse the principles which generate the practice of public service interpreting in its various contexts. Special attention is given to the reconstruction of the interpreters' *habitus*, which Inghilleri is not willing to locate within the subordination of the translators' and interpreters' activity under norm systems. She points to the interplay of the distinctive, conflictual, and contradicting *habitus* of the agents participating in the process of community interpreting, which eventually make up the dynamics of the interpreting situation and have the potential to change existing social relationships and social practices. In another paper, Inghilleri further explores the interpreting *habitus*. She first investigates the phenomenon of interpreting in the political asylum application procedure in the context of ethnographic questions, which discuss the "representation of the other" in interpreting. She then stresses Bourdieu's idea of the "zones of uncertainty in social space" where problematic gaps are revealed between individual expectation and actual experience (INGHILLERI, 2005a, p.70). The discordancy evident within these zones, however, creates the potential for agents to redefine their role, thus challenging a change "from within". This also entails a change of the interpreting *habitus*, generating new forms of interpreting practices. In her introduction to the special issue „Bourdieu and the Sociology of Translation and Interpreting“, Inghilleri discusses the ethnographic dimension in translation and introspects the relationship between Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and ethnographic approaches relevant for the practice of translation. Inghilleri identifies the major insights to be gained from Bourdieu's cultural sociology for the study of translation by the theorization of "the social". This suggests that the acts of translating and interpreting be understood through the social practices in the fields where they are generated, and in the view of translators and interpreters as agents who are both involved in the forms of practice in which they operate, and who are capable of transforming these practices through the working of their *habitus* (INGHILLERI, 2005b, p.143).

Another scholar who draws on the *habitus* is Rakefet Sela-Sheffy. She critically takes up Simeoni's arguments on the relatedness of *habitus* and norms, and argues in favour of a re-examination of the two notions calling attention to the principles of divergence and conformity as constructed entities and their relevance for the practice of translation in the translation field. Sela-Sheffy views this field as a space of stratified positions, regulated by its own internal repertoires and competitions, and equipped with an exclusive symbolic capital. The translation field's dynamics are detected in the "potential for perceiving the tension between the predictability and versatility of translators' preferences and choices, as determined by their group affiliation" (SELA-SHEFFY, 2005, p.19).

The reconstruction of a "translation field" is rather sceptically seen by Michaela Wolf. It seems as if the fundamental differences between the functional mechanisms operating respectively in the production processes of "originals" and "translations" do not enable the formation of a field in Bourdieu's sense. On the one hand, the agents involved cannot create enduring positions in the "field" due to the temporary character of their contacts; as a result, the transfer conditions necessary for translation production need to be constantly re-constituted. On the other hand, the various instruments for the consecration of translators and their products are much less established than those of "original" writers and their works; this results in a generally lower share of symbolic capital. Consequently, Wolf attempts to broaden Bourdieu's field notion through Homi Bhabha's theorem of the *Third Space*, which rather tends to correspond to the requirements of continuous re-negotiations and accentuates the dynamics of the transfer aspect particularly relevant for translation production (WOLF, 2005).

In another paper, Wolf attempts to address the agents in the translation process by theoretically modelling them on some of Pierre Bourdieu's main. The outline of the "mediation space" for the translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into German for example, tries to unravel the power relations inherent in the translational production process by identifying the massive capitals invested in the "Harry Potter" field (WOLF, 2002). In a rather different political and ideological context, Wolf takes up Bourdieu's theory of symbolic products and discusses the constraints that prevailed in the translation domain during the Nazi regime. It is shown that the role of translators

in the translation production and the translation phenomenon as such were instrumentalized in order to further foster the regime's ideology (WOLF, 2003).

The agents in the production and reception of translation, as well as their shaping role in the respective power relations and the relevance of the translation as cultural product which circulates in the inter- and transnational transfer are also highlighted in some other publications. The factors which operate in these construction processes are, to a high degree, socially driven and re-organised within social networks that condition the very specific interplay of the different mediation agencies. Two volumes are worth being mentioned here: The special issue "Traduction: Les Échanges littéraires internationaux" of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* by Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro (2002), and the thematic issue "Soziologie der literarischen Übersetzung" of *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* by Norbert Bachleitner and Michaela Wolf (2004). Both volumes share studies based on comprehensive corpora, which by adopting the analytical tools offered by Pierre Bourdieu, examine the translation flows on the global translation market as well as the conditions of production and distribution on behalf of the analysis of the various transfer mechanisms.

Heilbron and Sapiro argue that for inspecting translation processes, sociological approaches can shed light on the logics which determine the circulation of symbolic goods. One is operating within the political relationships between the countries involved, another one within the international book market, and a last one within the domains of cultural exchange. The conceptualisation of this international space of translation exchange as well as the discussion of its various constituents is understood as the basis of the volume's articles. They equally discuss transfers in the nineteenth century and in a contemporary context between various geographical spaces.¹

The editors of the second volume (BACHLEITNER/WOLF, 2004) intend to elaborate a programme for the development of a "sociology of literary translation". A sociological theory of translation is seen as an essential device for the international transfer of knowledge. The conceptualisation of a translation market, which is hierarchically structured according to the weight of the various languages, and which is substantiated by data of translated works in the international market,

is complemented by the illustration of the forces operating on this market and contributing to the promotion, prevention and manipulation of translations. In the “field”, for instance, centres dominated by power relations are being created around agents who dispose of massive capitals. Not only do these centres have ideological and aesthetic interests, but they also engage in the struggle for acceptance of translation products, e.g. if translators attempt to anticipate the ideas of critics and the reading public, or if they change a publishing house for the launching of a new book, in order to increase the economic and symbolic capital. The contributions of this special issue focus on the introspection of these questions in the literary translation domain in the German speaking countries.

Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of the production of cultural goods seems a particularly fertile ground for the deeper understanding of the social relevance and responsibility of the translation process. For the conceptualisation of a translation sociology, important insights have already been gained from the reflection and adoption of these methodological tools. It seems, however, that it is time to go beyond a predominantly heuristic employment of his social theory, and to more closely look into the theorizing potential of his framework for a more comprehensive understanding of translation. Hereby, the borders of his theoretical and analytical work for conceiving of a sociologically oriented translation studies must be critically questioned.

4. Conclusion

The sociology of translation may well become “a new branch of the sociology of culture and a promising domain for the study of the cultural world-system” (HEILBRON, 1999, p.440). The social constraints and dynamics, however, which are inscribed in the materiality of the translated text and in its discursive strategies, call first and foremost for the fostering and the refinement of the methodologies required to tackle these claims. The consideration of the questions raised and in part discussed in this paper, not only reveals translation’s processual character, but also allows for the conceptualisation of the agencies and agents involved within an open system that emphasizes the negotiation of symbolic forms in a world of global societal changes.

ABSTRACT

During the last ten years or so, the discipline of Translation Studies has undoubtedly become an established and recognized branch within the scientific community. This is also proven by the discussion of "turns", or "paradigmatic shifts", which recently have been increasingly the topic of various publications. Among these shifts, or turns, we can also find the increasing concern in questions regarding "the social" in translation, which discuss not only the networks of agents and agencies and the interplay of their power relations, but also the social discursive practices which mould the translation process and which decisively effect the strategies of a text to be translated.

Against this background, this paper seeks to discuss Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic forms in its application to the translation issue. It will particularly introspect Bourdieu's key terms field, capital and habitus and their function in the reconstruction of a "translation field". In the last few years, many works have drawn on Bourdieu's analytical tools in order to better understand the socially relevant functioning of translation processes in their wider perspective, including the operational functions of the social setting in which a translation is shaped. On the basis of these works, this paper sketches the outlines of a "Translation Sociology".

KEY WORDS: translation sociology, cultural turn, Pierre Bourdieu, methodology

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NOTA

¹ The works by Johan Heilbron cannot be discussed in detail here. He elucidates the international flow of translation between “centre” and “periphery” focusing on translations to and from Dutch and views these translation flows as part of an ample globalization process. With a critical eye on Even-Zohar’s *polysystem theory*, he stresses that target cultures have to be considered as part of a global constellation of national and supranational cultures. As a result, “a more complete sociological analysis may therefore seek to connect the dynamics of the international translation system with the actual working of the book market and its various segments” (HEILBRON, 1999, p.441).