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SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION IN THE TRANSLATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES' VOICES

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Abstract: The process of translation is lodged within social contexts. This starts with people who carry out the translation process as they belong to particular social system and further proceeds to the translation itself that is embedded in social institutions. These social institutions regulate different aspects of the process of translation, such as the choice, the output, and the dissemination of translation. Consequently, this leads to the translation strategies used in the translation itself. Investigating the agencies and agents involved in the translation process helps in realizing the translator and the researcher as constructing and constructed forces in society. This social dimension is not entirely remote from the cultural dimension since it is almost impossible to describe society adequately without culture and culture without society. Translating the voices of Syrian refugees with perspectives arising from miseries associated with war zones invites the receivers of these narratives to learn a lot about the catastrophic consequences of armed conflicts, and highlights the sociological role played by the different agents involved in the process of translation. Bourdieu's (1977) sociological notions of *field* and *habitus* have contributed much to the investigation of translation practices by translation agents and their role in submitting to or refuting the social norms that regulate their translation behaviors. This research seeks to explain how Bourdieu's notions of *field* and *habitus* can be employed in translation studies to account for the process of translation, and the role played by translation agents in this process.

Keywords: Sociological Dimension, Translation, Field, Habitus, Syrian Refugees

1. Introduction

According to Wolf (2011), the “sociological turn” in translation studies attempts to highlight the social influences around translation as an output activity. Concerns such as the role of translators as agents in the process of production, the process of production itself, the social factors influencing the process of translation, the network or the bonds between different actants, whether humans or non-humans, have invited the interest of different translation scholars, for example, Wolf (2011 & 2014) and Baker (2016) into the “sociological turn”. That is to say, the contextual construct of translation has expanded to include the roles of the different agents involved in the process of translation (Chesterman, 2001). The emergence of the sociological turn in translation studies has, therefore, been reflected in scholars' interest in examining the impact of social actions on translation as a network. Network here refers to the group of actors/actants surrounding the translation process, whether human or non-human. This social dimension is not completely remote from the cultural dimension. According to Pym (2006) “[w]e talk, too readily, about ‘sociocultural’ or ‘social and cultural’ approaches, contexts, factors, whatever. [...] No doubt the ‘social’ is also the ‘cultural’, in the sense that both are opposed to the ‘eternal’ or the ‘ontological’” (p. 14). Consequently, the rise of turns in translation studies TS and the shift from text bound approach to a contextual approach confirms the interdisciplinarity of TS. This paper is primarily concerned with the

sociological turn that sees translation as a social condition and translators as social agents. Out of this “sociological turn” in translation studies, sociological approaches started to emerge and tackle translation as a social practice that provides research questions and theoretical frameworks that lead translation studies onward. “Sociological turn” deals with translation as a social condition and translators as translation agents. Bourdieu is among the many scholars of sociology, for example, Luhmann (1984) and Latour (1998), who have contributed to the field by introducing methods of inquiry in translation studies. Bourdieu plays a major role by developing the notions of *field* and *habitus* to address sociological factors, such as the role played by translators as agents in the process of translation (Buzelin, 2005). The main structure of the habitus is the outcome of objectifying the social structure to the point of individual subjectivity. Therefore, habitus is like the structural conditions in which it appeared. Bourdieu explains that habitus relies primarily on history and individual memory. For example, a certain act or behavior is internalized into a society's structure when the original motive of that act or behavior is no longer recollected and is socialized into people of that culture. Bourdieu's concept of *field* seeks to facilitate the systematic investigation of any social order. A field is described as a “network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). The field is similar to a game. In the process of analyzing a field, the places that are held by individuals or groups are comprehended by examining their positions in the structure of power, as well as by investigating their objective relation to other positions, for instance, subordination, domination, homology, etc. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). To do this, an identification of what is at stake in the field is necessary, such as the degree to which people are invested in the game and why; and how the game and the figures involved acquire the status of doxa, acceptance of the world as it is. Fields exist within other fields. Although any given field has its own independence and logic, it is nonetheless impacted by the thinking of broader fields. It is this interrelated and embedded nature of the fields that allows for an analytical synthesis of how broader social structures and relationships influence the particular relationships of interest to the analyst (Dick, 2008). In developed societies, fields are so diverse and tangled; accordingly, the developed habitus will be involved in a condition where it is out of place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Under such conditions, those holding dominated positions may feel forced to either defend their positions or move up the social order (Bourdieu, 1984).

2. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice involves structures that Bourdieu describes as the “products of historical practices and are constantly reproduced and transformed by historical practices whose productive principle is itself the product of the structures which it consequently tends to reproduce” (2004, p.118). Bourdieu's theory of practice sets up a relationship between the structure, habitus, and practice of an individual agent. According to Bourdieu (1977), the families we live in, the company we work for, or the school we attend are all examples of a structure. Habitus is the social and cultural conventions we acquire from the structure, and practice is our socializing process guided by habitus. Therefore, the two central terms in the theory of practice are *habitus* and *practice*. Habitus is “a structuring structure” that organizes practices and our perception of practices. Practice refers to what people do or an individual's performance in everyday life. Bourdieu coins the term *habitus* to refer to patterns of thought and behavior that are deeply internalized structures. These mental structures are representations of the external social structures people are in interaction with on a daily basis. These internal structures inform our practice and drive us to behave in accordance with social and cultural

conventions. For instance, our family represents the external social structure we live within, and it teaches us to respect our elder, and we internalize this and interact with the elders with respect spontaneously. Another important notion in Bourdieu's theory (1977) is the notion of *field*. Field is a network of relations that exists apart from individuals' will and consciousness because individuals internalize many things during their socializing process, so the network of relations exists apart from individuals' consciousness. These networks are not only interactions or ties among individuals, but they could also be among people, also referred to by Bourdieu as agents or institutions constrained by field. These fields could be religion, education, or a field of business. In other words, a field is a social setting that hosts individuals with different habitus, which means different ways of thinking and speaking, and there are also rules within the field that are determined by the same institution. A case in point would be working for a certain company that represents a field; this company has its own set of rules and regulations which govern individuals' behavior like dressing in a certain way. Under these fields, subfields can exist with rules known as "field-specific" rules, and they change when the fields change. Rules, also known as doxa, are not always stated as they are mutually understood, recognized, and internalized by agents. Consequently, these rules become involuntary. It is important to note that rules vary with social fields even if they share the same social structure. Fields keep changing, yet they are autonomous, and this means that upon comparing two social fields, they can be independent of each other. Fields are influenced by the social space around them; there is a huge influence from external factors like politics, for instance. There is a constant struggle between internalized social traditions and the different external factors; however, the boundaries of social fields are not fixed but rather flexible; for example, if someone decides to challenge certain traditions (handshake) and people become convinced by this challenge, social field can change, which confirms its flexibility. Therefore, Bourdieu's sociology provides researchers of translation with conceptual tools to observe translations not simply from a linguistic angle but also from a social perspective that stresses the impact of social settings, social surroundings, and external powers on the production and circulation of translated works. Translation fields are dynamic and keep changing from one period of time to another, thus, bringing changes to the inclinations of translation agents (Hanna, 2016). In short, the dynamics of the field or social space under which translation agents function are likely to impact their choice of work for translation and also the ways the produced translation disseminates in its space of production.

3. The Translation of Syrian Refugees' Voices

In mid-March 2011, Syrian events took place in Syria in the form of demonstrations that led to serious confrontations between the protestors and the police forces. Due to the ongoing tension and the absence of a solution in the early stages of the crisis, the situation developed and paved the way for the military groups to engage in a struggle with the Syrian government forces and later to an international intervention that caused more damage to Syria. These conflicts in Syria caused serious destruction of Syrian houses and infrastructures, health problems, torture, mass deaths, and the disappearance of basic human needs that has resulted in a dreadful humanitarian catastrophe (Howard & Hussain, 2011; Pantti, 2013). Many Syrians have been forced to flee their hometowns, seeking refuge beyond the Syrian borders. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that, since the beginning of actions in Syria in 2011, Syrians have been forced to leave their hometowns to find safer places around Syria or its neighboring countries. An annual report of 2017, the UNHCR demonstrates that over 5.2 million Syrians are refugees in Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon,

Jordan, and Iraq, not to mention Syrian refugees in European countries. It is also stated on the UNHCR's website that internally relocated Syrians are estimated to be 7 million people. Many Syrian refugees have landed in neighboring countries with health conditions pertinent to "trauma and substandard living conditions including physical and mental health problems" (Souaiby, et al., 2016, p. 85). Media reports about the Syrian situation and its influence on Syrians have been the headlines of mass media, forming the perception of the national and international public reading about or following the escalations of this series of events about the Syrian crisis.

As a form of expression, translating the voices of Syrian refugees with perspectives arising from miseries associated with war zones "offers insight, comfort, encourages empathy and gives voice to the voiceless" (Norie, 2015). Narrating stories and real-life experiences about Syrian tragedies invites the audiences directly to witness realities that are not dictated through news media that might actualize victims as simple numbers and portray war as a game. The receivers of these narratives learn a lot about the catastrophic consequences of armed conflicts from the viewpoint of victims of conflicts. These told narratives import the tragic oppression of war on humankind (Forché, 1993; Norie, 2015). Since we live in a time characterized by the absence of empathy and human connection, it becomes vital to get the opportunity to listen to voices that awaken the minds to the tragic happenings of man-made catastrophes. These voices intensify feelings of compassion for others and enhance an understanding of the agony of warfare victims. This opportunity is presented by Syrian voices, or others voicing Syrians, shared through online platforms, which gives insights into the suffering of the Syrian refugees during the Syrian crisis. These shared narratives aim to raise awareness about war atrocities and provoke sympathy for Syrian victims. The strength of these shared narratives rests not only in their power to register the suffering of Syrian refugees, which might help in curing their injuries, but also in the responsibility it carries in raising the awareness of the target receivers of atrocities against mankind and in rousing protective actions to ward off such practices when they happen (Forché, 1993). The function of documenting human abuses under the conditions of warfare and forced exile is acknowledged in several media platforms that record atrocities against mankind. In response to the Syrian crisis, the international community has started to focus on containment and humanitarian aid. Therefore, addressing the refugee crisis and their living status has taken priority over resolving the Syrian conflict. These documented realities provide a rich source of knowledge that depicts the tough conditions and difficult circumstances which these refugees have faced. The translations presented of these documented realities narrate stories about oppression, torture, imprisonment, and loss, to name a few. These translations bear witness to the hard times when mankind is mistreated in nearly different parts of the world, including Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The significance of the talks documented in the online knowledge-sharing platform TED.com lies in their capacity to present human violations and voice the victims who resisted all the odds and strove to confront them.

Representing Bourdieu's theory of practice, the translation of a Syrian refugee talk featured in the online network TED.com is a case in point. Feras is a Syrian refugee and filmmaker who tells harrowing stories about displacement and his devastated community at an official TED conference. Feras talks about real-life superheroes who go beyond all possibilities to support Syrian refugees. The official talk is presented in English, and it is translated into several languages, including Arabic. The Arabic translation is carried out by Nawal Sharabati, a US citizen of Palestinian descent. Translation, in this sense, is a network of relations that exists apart from individuals' consciousness because individuals internalize many things during their socializing process. Translation is not only

interactions or ties among individuals; it further exists among agents or institutions constrained by a field. Simply put, translation, which is a social setting, involves individuals with different habitus, like the sender, producer, or translator of the text, with different ways of thinking and speaking. There are also rules within the field, and these rules are determined by the same institution, in this case, TED.com.

4. Conceptualization of the Translator's Habitus

On account of understanding Bourdieu's notion of habitus, this section attempts to demonstrate how a translator's habitus can be conceptualized by drawing upon Simeoni's (1998) social and professional habitus. Simeoni (1998) points out that "becoming a translator is a matter of refining a social habitus into a special habitus" (p.19). However, Simeoni has not indicated distinguishing features between both types of habitus, and this idea is further developed by Meylaerts (2010) into initial and professional habitus. Therefore, indicating that initial habitus is a primary part of the translator's habitus. It reflects the "individual's mental and physical structures as shaped by early socialization within structures of family, class, and education" and is "of primary importance for developing a sense of what is perceived as appropriate behavior" (Meylaerts, 2010, p. 2) in real practices. Meylaerts (2010) explicitly refers to professional habitus by stating that "the transposability of dispositions acquired through experiences related both to other fields and to a translator's larger life conditions and social trajectory may play a fundamental role in a translator's habitus" (p.15). In other terms, professional habitus is shaped by translators' later professions or primary professions.

Taking this as a starting point, the current paper attempts to further investigate the two types of a translator's habitus, the initial and the professional, with the translator of Feras's TED talk as a demonstrative example. Drawing upon Meylaerts' (2010) suggestion that a translator's initial habitus is shaped by his/ her early socialization related to family, class, and education, this study attempts to highlight that the professional habitus of a translator is likely to be related to the translators' later professions, and particularly those a translator becomes involved in as his/her primary profession. Given that most translators are simultaneously writers, journalists, editors, historians, teachers, etc., and not professional *translators*, discussions of translators' professional habitus must include both the habitus of the profession of translation and the habitus of the profession of any parallel discipline where the translator is occupied in, as translation is seen as "a field subject to so many invasions and interferences from adjacent fields" (Simeoni 1998, 24). Meylaerts (2010) suggests that experiences in different other fields are undoubtedly contributing elements to translators' "mental and behavioral schemata" (p. 5).

4.1 The Initial Habitus of the Translator

The social trajectory of Nawal Sharabati, the translator of Feras's talk, indicates that she is a Palestinian who was born, raised, and received part of her education in Palestine. In 1986, she obtained her bachelor's degree, majored in economics from BirZeit University Palestine, and got employed for years of her life in Ramallah until 2005. Her work experience started in 1986, teaching science and math at Modern Community College in Ramallah, Palestine. Then, for seven years, she was a teacher at the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1995 in Hebron, Palestine. A career shift took place in her life, and she held a financial officer position, then an account administrator in the finance department for around ten years at BirZeit University.

Later she moved to the USA to obtain several studies in various fields. In 2010, she received a certificate in information technology, followed by a certificate of

professional, written, and oral, interpersonal communication in 2011 from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Later, Sharabati participated in a translation certification program and became a certified translation professional CTP holder in 2015. Since then, she has been a self-employed professional. Sharabati has volunteered as a professional translator in a variety of humanitarian organizations. In 2014, she participated with The Rosetta Foundation as a translator of social services. Also, she joined Global Voices Online as a translator and an editor of social services in 2014 and till the present time. In 2015, she contributed to the translator's program at TED conferences for educational purposes as a translator and a reviewer till today. In 2018, she joined Translators without Border until present time, translating health-related matters. This volunteering experience has demonstrated cultural and social sensitivity when dealing with diverse ethnic groups through her translation projects.

4.2 The Professional Habitus of the Translator

By profession, Sharabati is a self-employed volunteer translator. She has been trained as a translator and has volunteered in several humanitarian organizations, aiming to foreground characters and events and to attract readers' immediate attention. This internalized style of translation has become part of her professional habitus. Speaking of her TED story, Sharabati says, "accidentally, I have joined TED via Amara to learn how to subtitle a video from English into my native Language. I began to browse TED.com, and I liked it so very much". In her TED experience, she was responsible for the translation of 244 talks, English into Arabic and vice versa. Sharabati transcribed 13 talks, translated 159 talks, and reviewed 72 talks by other translators. Her volunteer translation incorporated 115 TED stage talks, 82 TEDx talks, 25 TED-Ed originals, 12 TED institute talks, and 10 other different talks. Architecture, wildlife, women's rights, innovation, motherhood, and humor are among the diverse topics she translated. When Sharabati performs the role of a translator, her volunteering nature is her professional habitus. This professional habitus interferes with her translation and allows her much freedom in rewriting the story. As can be assumed from the translated talk, Sharabati's professional training and practice as a volunteer translator in humanitarian organizations have impacted her translatorial behavior, and her professional habitus as a translator is conspicuously affected by her profession as a self-employed translator. In addition, her Palestinian lineage, along with her American citizenship, have left heavy imprints on structuring her initial and professional habitus, which shaped her perception and action and regulated her translation activity. The reporting field habitus makes her convinced that the original stories of Syrian refugees are significant, or in other words, these stories should be voiced to outreach various communities. Sharabati's professional training and experiences as a translator arm her with the needed skills and techniques for this contribution. All these serve to explain Sharabati's set of dispositions in the process of translation. The set of dispositions acquired through the translator's initial and professional habitus are reflected in the text choice and the acquired translation strategies. Sharabati's choice to translate this Syrian refugee talk could partly be attributed to her lifelong struggle to help shape a national identity. The selected translation strategies attempted by translators are also attributed to the translator's purpose in translation. Would Sharabati adopt a transparent, fluent style to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers, therefore, domesticating the TT? Alternatively, would the translator produce a TT that deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining the foreignness of the original text, thus foreignization? It is noted that it would be hardly possible to draw a clear demarcation line between the two types of habitus, and there must be an overlapped area between both initial and professional habitus. However, a

translator's professional habitus is of high relevance to the set of dispositions structured by the translator.

5. Sample Analysis of Sharabati's Translation Resulting from her Habitus

For the purpose of investigating Sharabati's behavior in her translation of Feras's TED talk, a sample analysis of her translation is presented in table (1). It is important to note that the author of the ST is originally Syrian, and the ST is in English. Therefore, foreignization and domestication will be confusing to distinguish in the TT.

Table 1: The Translation of Feras' TED Talk and Translation Strategies

Source Text	Target Text	Translation Strategy
I documented stories of Syrians who opposed the Assad regime, in 2011...	وثقت قصص السوريين الذين عارضوا نظام الأسد، ف عام ٢٠١١.	Domestication
Khalid was one of the heroes in my first feature film, "Last Men in Aleppo."	كان خالد أحد الأبطال في فيلمي الطويل الأول، "آخر الرجال في حلب".	Domestication
It's a story of an extraordinary woman who founded an underground hospital in eastern Ghouta.	إنها قصة امرأة متميزة التي أنشأت مستشفى أرضي في الغوطة الشرقية.	Domestication

Based on the sample analysis given in table (1), it is noted how Sharabati adopts, almost in her translation, the domesticating strategy while translating Feras's TED.com talk. Therefore, it can be argued that Sharabati's beliefs are reflected in her translation practices.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the use of the concept of *field* inspires us to consider the autonomous nature of any social setting that we attempt to analyze. We can investigate the diversifications through which the social order is composed, and how these diversifications strive for dominance and authority within certain contexts. Furthermore, the concept of *habitus* enables us to examine how the translator's trajectories are demonstrated in the TT, i.e., her habitus, being structured and shaped through initial and professional internalized socialization, influences her practices in translation. Investigating and conceptualizing the translator's habitus aims to acknowledge the functional mechanisms of the translation process within the social settings that identify the position of the habitus within the contexts in which it works. Also, in this paper, factors influencing translation decisions have been addressed. In the direction of the translators' habitus, incorporating life and intellectual trajectories, impacting translators' behavior in translation, has been presented for further study. This further confirms that Bourdieu's (1977) theory is significant when applied to translation research and that, as Bourdieu suggests, all social agents are endowed with habitus. Habitus is not natural but acquired through past, personal, and social experiences, education, training, and individual history. The acquired dispositions are inscribed in the agents and "remain unnoticed until they appear in action" (Bourdieu 1990, p.139).

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