



The Sociology of Bourdieu and the Construction of the 'Object' in Translation and Interpreting Studies

Moira Inghilleri

To cite this article: Moira Inghilleri (2005) The Sociology of Bourdieu and the Construction of the 'Object' in Translation and Interpreting Studies, *The Translator*, 11:2, 125-145, DOI: [10.1080/13556509.2005.10799195](https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2005.10799195)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2005.10799195>



Published online: 21 Feb 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1784



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 61 View citing articles [↗](#)

The Sociology of Bourdieu and the Construction of the ‘Object’ in Translation and Interpreting Studies

MOIRA INGHILLERI

Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK

Abstract. This article introduces Bourdieu’s sociological perspective and its relevance to translation and interpreting studies. It discusses Bourdieu’s key concepts – habitus, field, capital and illusio – and their contribution to theorizations of the interaction between structure and agency in sociological and philosophical debates. Considerable attention is paid to the relationship between Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology and the emergent interest in the ethnographic tradition within translation and interpreting studies, particularly the influence of the interpretive approach of Geertz and the subsequent work of Clifford and Marcus within the culturalist paradigm. The question of methodology is addressed in relation to Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology and the construction of the ‘object’ of sociological research. The article further explores how Bourdieu’s concepts may be made to work empirically within translation and interpreting research and how much this depends on embracing Bourdieu’s ontological and epistemological stance. Bourdieu’s work is briefly explored in relation to other sociological theories that have begun to emerge as relevant to translation studies, in particular the work of Latour and Luhmann, and additional future directions for research within the sociology of translation and interpreting are suggested.

In the past decade, research in translation and interpreting began to draw on Bourdieu’s sociological theory. This interest in Bourdieu’s work is part of a shift within translation studies away from a predominant concern with translated textual products and toward a view of translation and interpreting as social, cultural and political acts intrinsically connected to local and global relations of power and control (Cronin 2003). The increased attention to Bourdieu is indicative of a paradigmatic shift within the discipline, toward more sociologically- and anthropologically-informed approaches to the study of translation processes and products. Bourdieu’s theoretical insights contribute a distinctive perspective in relation to the increasingly influential culturalist and globalist research paradigms within translation studies. The application of his theory to translation and interpreting research has also

been considered more specifically as part of the re-evaluation of descriptive and polysystems approaches, offering a more powerful set of concepts than norms and conventions to describe socio-cultural constraints on acts of translation and their resulting products (Simeoni 1998, Hermans 1999, Gouanvic 2002). His views on organized social and cultural practices and the strategies of different forms of capital have been used effectively to inform the insights offered by both existent and emerging perspectives within the discipline.

Bourdieu's work has also made a significant contribution to attempts within translation studies to focus more attention on translators and interpreters themselves – to analyze critically their role as social and cultural agents actively participating in the production and reproduction of textual and discursive practices. In particular, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, capital and *illusio* have made a valuable and unique contribution to the theorization of the interaction between agency and structure – the initiating activities of individuals and the structures which constrain and perhaps enable them – within translation and interpreting research. Bourdieu's conceptualization of this relationship, which will be explored more fully below, has proved useful for addressing the reproductive or transformative potential of acts of translation and interpreting within particular historical and socio-cultural contexts and the specific impact of translators, interpreters – and the complex of networks in which they operate – on translation and interpreting activities.

The emergent perception of translation and interpreting as socially-situated practices and their function in the production or reproduction of the local/global social order constitute the beginnings of a more sociological or 'social' approach to translation and interpreting research and practice. Not only has this view encouraged a greater interest in the role of agents and of institutions involved in translation or interpreting activity, it has also stimulated a focus on the location of and recognition given to translation and interpreting studies within academic disciplines and departments. But while there is a general acknowledgement that translation studies research has experienced a 'cultural turn' away from the dominance of linguistic and semi-otic approaches (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999) and their bias towards text-based analyses, distinctly sociological approaches remain at the development stage. It seems likely that any such approach will involve a certain degree of eclecticism with regard to theory, and it is therefore important to consider: (a) the particular relevance of Bourdieu's concepts within the context of this development; and (b) the extent to which Bourdieu's underlying ontology and epistemology can be integrated (if not fully embraced) within this endeavour.

In this introduction, several key aspects of Bourdieu's social theory will be briefly and critically explored. Bourdieu's key concepts and their relationship to the subject/object dichotomy within the social sciences will be introduced, and the particular significance of this relationship within trans-

lation and interpreting research and practice will be considered. The issue of method in Bourdieu's sociology will be addressed, focusing particularly on Bourdieu's views on reflexivity and the construction of the 'object' of sociological research. These will be discussed in the light of recent interest in ethnographic traditions within translation and interpreting research, particularly, though not exclusively, within the postcolonial paradigm. Some final insights will be offered regarding the future role and direction of a sociology of translation and interpreting studies.

1. Agency and structure

One of Bourdieu's main contributions to the social sciences has been to challenge traditional dichotomies, emanating from the Western philosophical tradition, between subject and object, rationalism and empiricism, relativism and universalism. At the heart of these dichotomies is the division between the individual and the external world. The rationalist view was that knowledge of the world was based on the inner subjective world of the mind, that it was innate. Rationalists believed in the possibility of objective knowledge, uncontaminated by the point of view of any observer and derivable from reason alone. For empiricists, the foundations of knowledge were to be found in immediate intuitions. The empiricist mind was an observer and collector of facts or appearances; it relied on faith in its own perceptions that the knowledge it acquired represented actual reality. Following Kant, the relationship between the self and the objective world came to be perceived more in terms of a clash between two fundamental epistemologies for which some form of synthesis was sought. The elaboration of this relationship has continued to influence attempts by modern philosophers and social scientists to construct an adequate ontology of the "general structures of human being" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999:86), to explore the question of how individuals come to 'know' the world, whether all humans know the same world or know the world in the same way. In the social sciences, this division has been maintained, for example, in the contrasting epistemologies of phenomenological and ethnomethodological approaches, on the one hand, and various forms of structuralism, on the other.

Bourdieu's sociology is continuous with these philosophical and sociological traditions. His sociological project involves a radical critique of theoretical reason – it seeks to reveal the limits of theoretical knowledge and also to illustrate, through empirical investigation, the gap between the logic of theory and the logic of practice. This involves a critique of structuralist attempts to develop conceptual schemes divorced from concrete analytical objects or projects. But it also includes his rejection of a philosophy of the subject which turns away from the external world and concentrates exclusively on the conscious individual to whom the world is given as immediately

familiar and meaningful. Bourdieu's social theory can be seen as an attempt to extend ontology to the social field (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999) through his particular elaboration of a 'reflexive sociology' which insists on a recognition of the interdependence of theory and method and the "self-analysis of the sociologist as cultural producer and a reflection on the sociohistorical conditions of a science of society" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:36). The sociologist is not only obliged to provide an account of the meaning of specific social practices in specific societies at specific historical moments, but also to contribute to an understanding of the human condition.

One of Bourdieu's key concerns is to conduct an examination of social life *as constituted in social practices*, not in individual actions, decision-making processes or expressions. For Bourdieu, individuals 'act' in habitual, conventionalized ways not through an act of special knowledge, drawing on a world of possible meanings, but in and through social practice. He rejects the idea of social actors as conscious, calculative rational beings, although he does allow for the possibility of "rational choice" under specific circumstances (*ibid.*:131). For Bourdieu, the social is not derived from the aggregation of individuals. The social predates the individual, and the individual is always viewed through his or her membership in some collective history (Bourdieu 1977:86). This relationship is at the heart of Bourdieu's genetic structuralism (Bourdieu 1990:14):

The analysis of objective structures – those of different fields – is inseparable from the analysis of the genesis, within biological individuals, of the mental structures which are to some extent the product of the incorporation of social structures; inseparable, too, from the analysis of the genesis of these social structures; the social space, and the groups that occupy it, are the product of historical struggles (in which agents participate in accordance with their position in social space and with the mental structures through which they apprehend this space).

The concept of 'social space' in combination with the concepts of habitus, field, capital and *illusio* provides the framework for Bourdieu's intellectual project. Each of these concepts will be considered below. They are further explored in the papers in this volume from a range of critical perspectives with regard to specific translation and interpreting contexts of practice where their sociological and theoretical significance – their use as conceptual tools – is demonstrated.

1.1 The construction of the 'object' in translation and interpreting studies

Taken together, the concepts of habitus, field, capital and *illusio* are pro-

posed as a ‘method’ by which to challenge the persistent dualism within the social sciences between subject and object. It is worth considering then how these concepts can be made to ‘work empirically’ within translation and interpreting research and to what extent this depends on embracing Bourdieu’s ontological and epistemological stance. This is not to suggest that a sociology of translation or interpreting need become too involved in the debates within the field of sociology over theoretical positions and positionings, though of course it might contribute to such debates. However, it is worthwhile to contemplate what the aims of a ‘sociology’ of translation or interpreting might be – and in what ways these might be distinguishable from culturalist, linguistic or semiotic approaches. This may contribute to a better understanding of where sociologically-located researchers and/or practitioners can stand in relation to translation (or interpreting) practices, a question which has recently been raised with respect to translation as a whole (Simeoni 2005:13):

Where can one stand to turn it [translation] into an object and circumscribe its limits? In the end it would seem that there is something about translation itself that must have been unsettling for the disciplines in the social sciences. Could it be related to the fact that translation – like languages more generally – is not an ordinary object, certainly not one that is easy to ‘objectify’? Where can one stand to turn it into an object and circumscribe its limits?

Simeoni raises an important question – if translation cannot easily be ‘objectified’, how can it be taken up within the social sciences as a legitimate form of knowledge? We can re-pose this to consider how any attempt to objectify translation might be framed within Bourdieu’s epistemological framework.

Bourdieu’s approach to the subject/object relation would suggest that the starting point for any attempt to objectify translation or interpreting should not be to try to define any ‘intrinsic properties’ of translation or to apply, *a priori*, scientific concepts like field or habitus, for example. The real starting point is the empirical investigation of the relevant social practices, their location within particular fields and the *relational* features of capital involved in both *acts* of translation or interpreting (see Thoutenhoofd, this volume) as well as the academic *scholarly activity* which takes place in relation to such acts, and their relationship to the field of power. This would include an account of the ‘taken for granted’ sets of dispositions of the individuals and institutions involved and of what appears to ‘commit’ the individuals or institutions involved to the specific social practices under investigation. It would involve the recognition of the social determinations that motivate the research and/or practice, including the presuppositions inherent in researchers’

'scientific' stance (everything from what factors determine what *counts* as a relevant practice to decisions about field methods), as well as the social and biological trajectories of translators or interpreters (see Fekry Hanna, this volume). In other words, it would necessitate 'objectivizing the objectivizing point of view' – it is this 'view from the field' that would ultimately create and determine the 'object'.

2. Ethnography, reflexivity, objectivism

In Bourdieu's ethnography of Algeria, presented in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), one of his main objectives was to challenge the nature of anthropologists' accounts of cultural life through their failure to scrutinize their relationship to their object of study. This, he suggested, "condemned [them] to see all practice as spectacle" (Bourdieu 1977:1). The concepts of habitus and symbolic capital that appeared in this work played a central role in this critique and continue to inform the relationship of Bourdieu's thought to ethnographic practice. As a role for contemporary ethnography has been considered in translation studies, particularly in approaches concerned with the social, cultural and political significance of the research (Sturge 1997, Wolf 2002, Tymoczko 2003, Buzelin 2005), it is worth considering what might constitute ethnography in this context and how it would relate to Bourdieu's interpretation and application of ethnographic practice within his reflexive sociology. Before discussing this, however, a brief account of developments in ethnography since the 1970s may be useful.

2.1 The textualization of culture

After a longstanding tradition of ethnographic field work as the *sine qua non* of anthropology, from the 1960s onwards ethnography came under scrutiny as a result of decolonization, feminist and civil rights movements, and also as a consequence of emerging critiques within the social sciences of structuralist and other 'totalizing' accounts of cultures (Clifford and Marcus 1986:1-26). As a method in social science research, ethnography (and ethnographic *writing*) had normally been associated with social anthropology – from Malinowski's writings on the Trobriand Islanders and the urban studies of the Chicago School to more recent figures like Clifford Geertz, Paul Rabinow, James Clifford and George Marcus. Under the guise of a 'quasi-scientific objectivism', social anthropologists had traditionally given little attention to the geo-political implications of their ethnographic field work, their relationship to their 'subjects' or their eventual written accounts of these experiences. The tendency had been for abstraction and impersonalization in the name of scientific and textual authority (Spencer 2001). Despite a professional ideology of polyglot engagement based on Malinowski's ex-

ample, it was not, in truth, normal practice for ethnographers to know much of the local language(s) of the groups they studied (or even to employ interpreters), as the interpretation of their cultures was tied primarily to ethnographers' observations and descriptions, not their dialogue with informants (Clifford 1983:124-25). The traditional ethnographic *encounter* with the people studied was rarely described – written accounts provided only an “illusion of specificity” without any specific temporal or spatial vantage point (Crapanzano 1986:75).

At the same time, there had been a long-standing tradition amongst social anthropologists with an interest in literary theory of collecting and writing up fieldwork as though it were a literary text.¹ Clifford Geertz gave explicit voice to this tradition in his semiotic approach to culture which was developed in response to the prevailing view amongst cognitive anthropologists that culture and language existed in individual minds as a set of organizing principles for generating appropriate behaviour within a culture (Goodenough 1964). In contrast, Geertz viewed culture as an assemblage of texts, the stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures that enable a society to exist as more than just an aggregate of individuals. Geertz' semiotic approach foregrounded the social dimension of cultural knowledge and practice, viewing culture as grounded in social processes and relationships. The task of the ethnographer was to represent social reality through ‘thick description’, a term Geertz appropriated from the analytic philosopher Gilbert Ryle who distinguished between the ontological status of a blink, the (involuntary) act of contracting one's eyelids, and a wink, a purposeful, cultural sign (Geertz 1973:6). For Geertz, doing ethnographic analysis meant sorting out the structures of signification, the established codes of a culture (*ibid.*:9), analytically prioritizing the sign over the ‘lived experiences’ it was deemed to represent (Lee 1988).

The ‘interpretive’ paradigm associated primarily with Geertz dominated social anthropology throughout the 1970s, though not uncritically. A main concern was that the emphasis and value placed on the ethnographic text meant that, although intended to *represent* social realities, it actually served to elide the difference between reality and representation (Spencer 2001). The text came to be viewed as a controlling discourse, and the shared system of meanings it purported to represent were recognized as constructions of the ethnographer alone – an effect of style. Arguments were made for acknowledging and, where possible, making accessible the source of a particular textual construction in the form of notebook entries, informant's explications backed by quotations, descriptive comments, etc., in an attempt

¹ Clifford identifies figures like Malinowski, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jean Duvignaud, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir and Clifford Geertz amongst these (Clifford and Marcus 1986:3).

to present less mediated representations (*ibid.*).² By providing their audience with access to the 'raw data', it was claimed, the ethnographer's text could be read as only one possible version of the 'reality' described and not as a finished product, thus opening up the possibility of empirical challenge to both description and interpretation (Sperber 1986).

Geertz, however, always maintained the impossibility of the use of 'uninterpreted data' – "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz 1973:9). For Geertz, ethnographic descriptions represented the imaginative reach of our subjective consciousness; the value of ethnography was to "enable a working contact with a variant subjectivity" (Geertz 1986:119). Ethnographic descriptions represented a 'meeting of minds', encounters which, for Geertz, always offered "the possibility of quite literally, and quite thoroughly, changing our minds" (*ibid.*:114).

2.2 Authority, authenticity and the text

A further and more significant challenge to the interpretive paradigm came in the form of a critique of both the authority and authenticity of the ethnographic text. This critique took a variety of forms, but its main aim was to challenge the very idea of textual representation. In particular, it called into question the authority of the author, the specialized competence of the anthropologist, and the notion of an autonomous subject. It focused attention on the suppression of multiple voices in the ethnographic text, and sought to radicalize the 'dialogic' dimension in ethnographic writing (Clifford 1983, Clifford and Marcus 1986).

A variety of strategies were pursued in order to represent the ethnographic text as dialogic and polyphonic, drawing on a range of influences associated with the then emergent poststructuralist, postcolonial and feminist critiques of the modernist project. Some were underscored theoretically by Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque – the interplay and struggle of diverse voices within a novel/text. Derrida's notion of the 'metaphysics of presence' was also brought to bear on the question of representation, pointing to the impossibility of bringing the phenomena of the field in ethnographic research into full presence, the idea of the ethnographic event as an exemplar of an absent present, and of ethnographic writing as nothing more than meaning deferred, the writing of difference – the elusive gap between the inscription and the unfolding of the event observed. From Foucault, ethno-

² Clifford (1986:136) notes that the early final works of Malinowski, Boas and Lienhardt, for example, included substantial amounts of uninterpreted data.

graphic representations were taken to be examples of ‘social facts’, neither true nor false, but located “within the true” of particular social practices and constrained by historical, social and political relations of power (see Rabinow 1986:238-43).

In the context of these differing views of representation, the status of the ethnographic text was irreversibly altered. Although it remained a central ‘object’ of research, it was no longer evaluated in terms of its correspondence to any social reality; rather it was understood to be both contestable and contingent. Ethnographic fieldwork was also viewed as explicitly caught up in networks of power, at both the micro and the macro level. Practical strategies to counter and address these dynamics both in the field and beyond included the creation of multi-authored texts, the collaboration of the individuals or groups studied in all phases of the research, and an explicit acknowledgement of the complicity of the ethnographer in the reproduction and transformation of local/global relations of power. Spencer offers other examples of what he calls “formalized versions of post-modern ethnography” (Spencer 2001:450), including the frequently cited “stock passages of ethnographic self-reflection” and the growth of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodologies which he (*ibid.*) somewhat cynically suggests

at best, force researchers to think about ways in which the powerless and the excluded can be encouraged to articulate their concerns about policies that directly affect them, but which, at their crudest, might be seen as instant polyphony kits, allowing even the least engaged researcher the opportunity to obtain ‘authentic voices’ to paste into their otherwise prefabricated reports.

Such strategies have more recently been linked to the type of subjectivist reflexivity that has predominated in anthropology, from earlier functionalist to more recent postmodern ethnographies (Marcus 1998:193). They are associated with what Marcus refers to as the self-indulgent and narcissistic “null form of reflexivity” (*ibid.*) that extends from the confessional to the ‘polyphonic kits’ alluded to above. Bourdieu has also criticized this form of reflexivity in anthropology from his earliest engagement with ethnography for failing to adequately engage with notions of truth, representation and power. These issues, which remain central to the ongoing ‘crisis in ethnography’, are central to Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology. A key aspect of Bourdieu’s epistemology is its grounding in critical ethnographic understanding that is, at the same time, objective (see Blommaert, this volume). In the following sections, the ethnographic traditions discussed above will be reconsidered in relation to Bourdieu’s insistence on ‘objectivizing the objectivizing distance’ and in so doing theorizing the limits of anthropological or sociological knowledge.

2.3 Bourdieu's theory of practice

As discussed above, Geertz's interpretative approach to culture theorized the relationship between the subject and the objective system of signs through the textualization of the social world. Ethnographic data was 'socially constructed' in the sense that it was the product of the ethnographer's subjective experiences of another culture objectivized in a text. The text was the representation of the inter-penetration of cultures based solely on the authority of the ethnographer's imaginative grasp of the publicly available meanings operating within the culture under investigation. For more contemporary interpretive ethnographers, the intersubjective experience has been perceived more dialogically and self-consciously – the ethnographer engages his or her cultural informants in the interpretative process as equal partners, each 'authentically' contributing to the creation of the ethnographic text, engaged openly in the hermeneutic task of intersubjective understanding. Despite their differences however, in both versions the ethnography, the cultural encounter, is viewed essentially in *hermeneutic* terms. In Geertz's version, the social nature of the encounter is absorbed into the semiotic space of the text; in the other more critical perspectives, the social takes the form of subjective self-criticism based on the ethical, moral or political positionings of the ethnographer in relation to his or her subjects. Even the more explicitly post-modern versions of ethnography, which stress the limitations of all forms of representation, nevertheless continue to engage in a hermeneutics of the text through techniques such as defamiliarization, polyphony, etc. (Tyler 1986).

Bourdieu's response to each of these positions (and positionings) is to argue that intersubjectivity never occurs between individuals except in *appearance*; the 'truth' of the interaction is never entirely contained in it (Bourdieu 1977:83; emphasis added):

to describe the process of objectification and orchestration in the language of interaction and mutual adjustment is to forget that the interaction itself owes its form to the *objective structures which have produced the dispositions of the interacting agents* and which allot them their relative positions in the interaction and elsewhere.

It is here that habitus, one of Bourdieu's most widely referenced concepts, comes into being. For Bourdieu, intersubjective understanding of the type that occurs between ethnographer and subject, or between members of the same culture, is a product of the habitus. Unlike ethnographic traditions which account for the achievement of or struggle over shared meanings between or within cultures by positing an objective systems of signs or a Bakhtinian polyphony, for Bourdieu habitus demonstrates how social agents can be determined and yet be acting too – how behaviour can be regulated

and shared without being the product of conformity to codified, recognized rules or other causal mechanisms.

The notion of habitus attempts to account for how regularities of behaviour become established and maintained through what Bourdieu terms *strategies*, “the product[s] of the practical sense as the feel for the game, for a particular, historically determined game – a feel which is acquired in childhood, by taking part in social activities” and that presupposes the capacity for invention and adaptation (Bourdieu 1990:62-63). Strategies are seen as dependent upon social knowledge acquired through socialization, and it is through the habitus that agents come to ‘know’ the world, not consciously, but in a taken-for-granted sense. The habitus is what enables agents to feel at home in the world as the world is ‘embodied’ in them. The body is accorded a centrality in Bourdieu’s theory – it is in bodily hexis that the individual and the social converge. The body is the carrier of the classificatory schemes of the culture, the practical taxonomies that are produced *by* perceiving subjects, and which position them (and others) in social space. Social conventions animate the body which then reproduces and ritualizes those conventions as practices (Butler 1999).

Bourdieu’s interest in the classificatory schemes of particular cultures is directly linked to his interest in how knowledge and power are distributed within and between social individuals and collectivities. Such schemes structure the particular ‘logic of practice’ that competing groups use to produce and reproduce themselves and their direct access to different forms of social capital. It is within the contexts of particular fields and through the habitus (normally ‘at home’ in the field it inhabits), that social agents establish and consolidate their positions of power in social space, where all have a stake in the acquisition of specific forms of capital. This is in essence the relationship between habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu 1990:87-88):

Fields are historically constituted areas of activity with their specific institutions and own laws of functioning. The existence of specialised and relatively autonomous fields is correlative with the existence of specific stakes and interests; via the inseparably economic and psychological investments that they arouse in agents endowed with a certain habitus, the field and its stakes (themselves produced as such by power relations and struggle in order to transform the power relations that are constitutive of the field) produce investments of time, money, work, etc. ... In other words, interest is at once a conditioning of the functioning of a field, in so far as it is what ‘gets people moving’, what makes them get together, compete and struggle with each other, and a product of the way the field functions.

Bourdieu’s focus on *fields* as opposed to social or cultural *groups* also distances him epistemologically from traditional ethnography (Barnard

1990:75-78). For Bourdieu, the concept of fields captures the relatively autonomous social microcosms that constitute a network of objective relations between objectively defined positions of force within social space. The principle of the dynamic of a field lies in the *relations between* the various forces that confront one another. This confrontation between the social agents or institutions located within the field is always constituted in relation to the distribution of specific forms of capital – it involves a struggle to gain symbolic and material advantage with respect to social positioning. These relations can take the form of domination, subordination or homology. The form of the power dynamic is dependent upon the relation between habitus and field, on how the habitus of the agents occupying the field is actualized in a given situation. The actualization of the habitus within a particular field is to a large extent ‘pre-determined’ or ‘pre-adapted’ by the particular social and biological trajectory of the agents involved, or as Bourdieu would have it, “social agents are determined only to the extent that they determine themselves” (Bourdieu 1990:136). Bourdieu is keen to point out that the habitus is not necessarily predictive of a determinate action, and that habitus is only revealed in situated social experiences (Bourdieu 1977:82-83). However, given the ontological complicity between an individual and the social world – habitus and field – social agents are likely to reproduce the conditions of their immediate status, favourable or not, with respect to existing field relations.

If, as for Bourdieu, competition and conflict are at the core of human activity, or to invoke a metaphor found in Bourdieu’s writings, they are central to the ‘game’ of human life, the question of motivation or interest becomes crucial, particularly where, as suggested above, players enter the playing field from unequal positions of power in the form of varying types and degrees of capital. Bourdieu draws on the notion of *illusio* (from *ludos*, game) to account for what allows agents to become invested, taken in and by the game, which is “both presupposed and produced by the functioning of historically delimited fields” (Bourdieu 1990:115). There must be, he suggests, a tacit recognition amongst players of the value of the stakes of the game – a belief that they are important and worth pursuing – and of the practical mastery of its rules. It is both players’ belief in the game and their interest in its stakes that grants unquestioned recognition of the rules for both entering the game and competing for its stakes (*ibid.*:115-17).

The concept of *illusio* suggests for some a type of ‘false consciousness’ – the “self-deception necessary to keep players involved in the game” (Rabinow and Dreyfus 1999:90). On the other hand, it has also been understood more as a further way of indicating the limits of awareness involved in lived experience, including both mis-recognition and non-recognition, based not on self-deception, but on “culturally-specific modes of grasping the nature of actions, the ‘conditions of existence and the dispositions of agents’ and the available cultural vocabularies” (Calhoun 1995:145; and see

Gouanvic, this volume). Furthermore, the experiences and outcomes for players, acting agents, in the game – which are constantly reproduced *and* transformed by historical practices – may at any point contribute to significant ruptures within the field and to the habitus, which may in turn result in disruption and challenge to the status quo.

The concept of *illusio* clearly illustrates the limitations and theoretical distortions involved in hermeneutic representations of social practices which transfigure social reality in their own image whilst intending to reclaim it or even transform it for the social agents who inhabit it.

2.4 Bourdieu's reflexive sociology

Perhaps more than any other constructed and constructing relationship, Bourdieu was most interested in the encounter between theory and practice, between the observer and the observed. As suggested above, one of Bourdieu's principle criticisms of anthropologists doing ethnography was their failure to objectify their own objectifications. His critique of anthropology registered in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* is echoed in later criticisms of anti-foundationalist positions which “elide the question of the (social) foundation of critique”, “‘deconstruction’ that fails to deconstruct the de-constructor” and “the illusion of a ‘view from everywhere’ that narcissistic reflexivity pursues in its postmodern form” (Bourdieu 2000:107). For Bourdieu, all were guilty of what he termed “scholastic epistemocentrism” (*ibid.*:50) or what Wacquant refers to as “intellectualist bias” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:39-40) – that is, the ignoring or repressing in their accounts of the object of their research, the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in the analytical tools and operations of their discipline. This is the moment, according to Bourdieu, when scientific thought encounters the social world and risks destroying its object; when ‘practical logic’ risks being collapsed into ‘theoretical logic’. It is at this point that the social scientist must acknowledge and maintain the distinct forms of knowledge that inform his or her relation to the social world (Bourdieu 2000:50):

first, the primary understanding of the world that is linked to experience of inclusion in this world, the – almost invariably mistaken and distorted – understanding that scholastic thought has of this practical understanding, and finally the – essential – difference between practical knowledge – reasonable reason – and the scientific knowledge – scholastic, theoretical, reasoning reason – that is generated in autonomous fields.

The aim of social science is thus to reconstruct practical logic theoretically by *including in the theory* the gap between practical and theoretical logic.

This is achieved by “subjecting the position of the observer to the same critical analysis as that of the constructed object at hand” (Barnard 1988:75). For Bourdieu, this is of far more relevance than either the social trajectories (the particularities of gender, ethnicity, class, etc.) of individual researchers or their positioning within an academic field, including its relation to the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:39).

For Bourdieu, it is the task of the sociologist to “tell about the things of the social world, and, as far as possible, to tell them the way they are” (Bourdieu 2000:5). By subjecting the sociologist to the same critical analysis of the thing observed, Bourdieu aimed to strengthen the epistemological position of ‘objectivity’ within social scientific knowledge. This distances his position on reflexivity from those discussed above. But to be consciously present in the ethnographic encounter did not force him into an unavoidable subjectivism (Bourdieu 1990:178):

To consider the social integration of the scientist as an insurmountable obstacle to the construction of a scientific sociology is to forget that the sociologist can find weapons against social determinism in the very science which brings them to light, and thus to conscious awareness.

Bourdieu’s vision for a scientific sociology is clear. He rejects the idea that in order to overcome the subject/object dualism one must abandon a claim to an objective social science. The possibility that doing objective social science allows one to “step outside the habitus and *illusio*” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1999:92) is for many critics (and supporters) Bourdieu’s most controversial and dubious claim (*ibid.*; and see Jenkins 1992, Calhoun *et al.* 1993, Marcus 1998), for it appears to contradict his refusal to accept the autonomy of subjective knowledge. But Bourdieu’s point is that reflexive analysis – ‘stepping outside the habitus and *illusio*’ – is not achieved through *subjective* understanding. It is achieved by objectifying, *in concrete situations*, both the object and the objectification of the object – engaging in a sociology of sociology – in order to apprehend the limits imposed on scientific knowledge itself. These limits on knowledge/self-knowledge do not originate in the ‘socially-determined’ subject, but in the social determinants of different forms of social practice, including sociology itself.

3. The place of Bourdieu’s sociology within translation and interpreting studies

Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology has as its central aim a critique of power as constituted in cultural, social and historical practices. In this sense it shares a common focus with the culturalist paradigm – largely associated with postcolonial writing and translation – and its growing interest in viewing

acts of translation as ethnographic encounters. Tejaswini Niranjana, amongst others, has noted similarities between translation and ethnography in the postcolonial context (Niranjana 1992). Maria Tymoczko has discussed the many similarities between postcolonial writing and translation with respect to the questions of representation, authenticity and authority discussed above (Tymoczko 1999). The almost exclusive focus on the text which writers and scholars working within this paradigm maintain (Sela-Sheffy 2000, Buzelin 2005), however, indicates a continuation of the subjectivist hermeneutics discussed above, regardless of the theoretical perspective adopted – poststructuralism, deconstruction, feminism, etc.

Bourdieu's commentary on hermeneutic approaches and his alternative conceptualizations of the observer/observed relationship suggest significant epistemological differences between the culturalist paradigm and his reflexive sociology of translation. These can be noted in his insistence on the idea that intersubjectivity is always marked by and through the *habitus*; his privileging of the concept of *fields* and their relation to the distribution of specific forms of *capital* as the locus for all intersubjective understanding; and his view of the workings of *illusio* which keep social actors invested in certain social practices and inform the very conditions of their understanding.³

But what of the relationship between Bourdieu and other more sociological theories currently being developed within translation and interpreting research? If Bourdieu's reflexive sociology distances him from the literary/hermeneutic approaches discussed above, might there be greater potential overlap, despite important differences, with, for example, Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (Buzelin, this volume) or Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (Hermans 1999)? As these theories have been taken up as potential fertile areas for future research, they will be considered briefly below.

3.1 Bourdieu and Latour's Actor-Network Theory

Latour's work is located within an anti-foundationalist philosophy of science and is opposed to Bourdieu's epistemology on a number of levels. As a

³ Douglas Robinson (1997) has noted a tendency in certain postcolonial readings of the colonizer/colonized relationship to privilege 'nativist' and 'foreignizing' representations of colonized cultures based on abstract theorizations and often with a disregard for the actual complexities of the practices and relationships under examination. For Bourdieu, such hermeneutical approaches, even when informed by a strong sense of social justice, serve only to create yet another *unreflected-upon representation* of the translated object. For this reason, both *acts* of translation (and interpreting) as well as the *academic discourses* attached to these must themselves be objectified in order to make transparent the potential power off *all* discursive practices to 're-present the real' (see Vidal Claramonte, this volume).

method, it owes a good deal to ethnomethodology (see Garfinkel 1967), a branch of sociology which attempted to define social reality as/through the way members indigenously organize and assess the rationality of their own activities in everyday life. Ethnomethodologists sought to make the familiar strange by deriving notions of the social from informants in order to recapture a view of social reality as constituted in/through actors' experiences of everyday practices. Likewise, Latour holds that the fundamental task of social scientists is to provide a platform for social actors to be heard. Like Bourdieu, he seeks an end to the subject/object dualism. However, Latour rejects both the idea of a 'view from everywhere' as well as Bourdieu's claim that scientific objectivity can be accomplished by (the sociologist) articulating social positions and positionings. For Latour, actors enact particular forms of knowledge, for example 'doing science' (or translation or interpreting), by virtue of engaging in the activities related to and relevant to their production. The task of the social scientist is to assemble, based on solid evidence, information about what matters to the actors involved in the 'doing' and to produce good descriptions of these activities.

Bourdieu would not argue against the idea of the logic of practice – on the contrary, it is of fundamental relevance to his reflexive sociology. Bourdieu would argue, however, that the descriptions Latour's social actors provide are inherently social ones; they are themselves dependent on the actors' position in the social world (Bourdieu 2000:189; emphasis in original):

Since one cannot be content either with the primary vision or with the vision to which the world of objectification gives access, one can only strive to *hold together*, so as to integrate them, both the point of view of the agents who are caught up in the object and the point of view on this point of view which the work of analysis enables one to reach by relating position-takings to the positions from which they are taken.

To restrict scientific observation to the point of view of the agents is to "treat as an instrument of knowledge what ought to be the object of knowledge" (Bourdieu 1992:246). Furthermore, for Bourdieu, the paradoxical implication of this "semblance of radicalism" (due to its claim to rehabilitate ordinary thinking) is the potential maintenance of a social conservatism (*ibid.*), since the objective structures that have produced actors' dispositions – their habitus – remain unexamined.

3.2 Bourdieu and Niklas Luhmann's systems theory

In contrast to Latour, in Niklas Luhmann's systems theory the individual becomes more of an observer; the autonomous subject is replaced with the autonomous function system. Luhmann views modern society as structured

according to the principle of functional differentiation, lacking any overall integration and free from the influence of human individuals. Unlike Habermas, who argues that the threat to the individual of ‘systems rationalization’ can be met through resistance from the ‘lifeworld’ – culture, traditions, etc. (Habermas 1985) – Luhmann emphasizes the total autonomy of functional systems from both the environment and the interests or needs of individuals. Society is constituted by these operationally closed, incommensurable systems that establish and reproduce themselves autopoetically – they are self-referential and self-organized; “the ‘language’ of one system cannot be adequately translated into the ‘language’ of another” (Rasch 2000:145).

For Luhmann, these communicative systems (similar to Bourdieu’s fields) are the basic elements of the social system. Each system encodes in binary terms the contingent, disordered and fragmented nature of the modern world; each strives to become internally meaningful through a process of enforced selectivity. By way of illustration, Luhmann contrasts his model with the sender-receiver model of communication that grants priority over the meaning of an utterance to the *transmitter* of a message. Instead, he argues in systems’ terms for the primacy of *reception*. He distinguishes between an initial ‘utterance’ – any informational input to the system – which, he claims, offers only a *suggestion* of meaning, and the incoming ‘information’ – the part of the initial utterance that is *selected as meaningful* by the receiver (*ibid.*:54; see also Luhmann 1995). Importantly, for Luhmann, the utterance comes into the system not from individuals or some external environment (which remains an ‘unknown’ or ‘unthought’) but from environmental “perturbations” or triggering devices (*ibid.*:144) that stimulate the system’s internal organization to act. Unlike for Bourdieu, there is no relationship between the internal and the external – there is only the autonomous, self-perpetuating system.

Luhmann does make a distinction between first order and second order observation (Blühorn 2000:348) which is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s double reflexivity discussed above. Like Bourdieu, Luhmann was critical of social theory which viewed social reality through first order observation alone, considering it a form of moral fundamentalism (*ibid.*). Despite this apparent shared critique, however, Bourdieu opposes systems theories like Luhmann’s on a number of grounds. For Bourdieu, society – as perceived through the inter-related concepts of field, habitus, capital and *illusio* – presupposes *struggles* between dominated and dominant *fields* that are inhabited by *significant* agents and institutions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:102-103). Although fields and functional systems may share surface similarities, Bourdieu argues (*ibid.*:103), different fields

form a system of differences, of distinctive and antagonistic properties, which do not develop out of their own internal motion (as the

principle of self-referentiality implies) but via conflicts internal to the field of production. The field is the locus of relations of force – and not only of meaning – and of struggles aimed at transforming it, and therefore of endless change.

Unlike Luhmann, Bourdieu believes in the *transformative potential* of scientific objectivity derived from sociological, empirically-based observations of the world. On this point, Luhmann, sounding more like Latour, would argue that the sociologist or philosopher can only produce better descriptions of modern society – though not of actors, only of abstract systems – that account for what *is* rather than what ought to be (morally, politically, ethically, etc).

3.3 Future Directions

It seems likely that the emerging sociology of translation and interpreting will develop a certain eclecticism with respect to social theory or, indeed, establish divergent and competing approaches. Each of these possibilities suggests a future of innovative and energized dialogue and debate. It can also constitute the beginnings of a meta-view of acts of translation and interpreting that will help to erode the established theoretical divisions between the two activities and perceive them instead as different but related socially- and politically-informed practices. The sociological and philosophical perspectives introduced in this introduction also make clear their distinction from the culturalist paradigm which, though equally concerned with social relations of power, has maintained the literary text as its primary focus.

Two important and relevant issues – agency and language – have not been examined specifically with respect to translation and interpreting in this introduction. The complex question of agency, which is treated distinctly in each of the perspectives discussed above, has been considered of primary importance in the endeavour to make descriptive theoretical approaches more ‘agent aware’ and translators and interpreters more visible as social actors. Latour’s views on the actor network, Bourdieu’s on the habitus and reflexivity, and Luhmann’s on the insignificance of agency, offer interesting contrastive methods for exploring the role of translators and interpreters in relation to their respective practices. The potential utility of these methods can be measured through more empirical research on what translators and interpreters actually do and say they do in the widest possible contexts of their professional practice.

The function of language in the formation of the subject is also of central concern to translators and interpreters and the networks in which they operate. Bourdieu’s view – that the effect of speech acts or ‘social performatives’ is not based on language per se, but on the institutional conditions that pro-

duce and take on specific forms of authorized discourse (Bourdieu 1991) – warrants further investigation in translation and interpreting contexts. This limited view of the social nature of language leaves open the question of the potential contributory role of the rational subject as activator of the transformative capacity of the habitus (Inghilleri 2003). As Judith Butler has argued, “the social performative is a crucial part not only of subject *formation*, but of the ongoing political contestation and reformulation of the subject as well” (Butler 1999:125).

Despite such caveats, however, Bourdieu does provide important insights into what must be involved in the construction and observation of the object of practice and research in the field of translation and interpreting studies. His underlying assumptions with respect to the production and reproduction of knowledge, captured in the concepts of habitus, field, capital and *illusio*, can serve as an important starting point for sociologically-informed translation and interpreting research. In particular, Bourdieu’s theorization of the social suggests that acts of translation and interpreting be understood through the social practices and relevant fields in which they are constituted, that they be viewed as functions of social relations based on competing forms of capital tied to local/global relations of power, and that translators and interpreters, through the workings of the habitus and *illusio*, be seen as both implicated in and able to transform the forms of practice in which they engage. In this way, Bourdieu offers a sound theory of practice to the developing sociological paradigm in translation and interpreting studies – and a solid reminder of the social relevance and responsibility involved in both research and practice in the field.

MOIRA INGHELLERI

*Goldsmiths College, University of London, New Cross, SE14 6NW, UK.
m.inghilleri@gold.ac.uk*

References

- Barnard, Henry (1990) ‘Bourdieu and Ethnography: Reflexivity, Politics and Praxis’, in Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes (eds) *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, London: Palgrave, 58-85.
- Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi (eds) (1999) *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1990) *In Other Words*, trans. Matthew Adamson, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, Cambridge: Polity Press.

- (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, London: Polity Press.
- and Loïc J. D. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blühdorn, Ingolfur (2000) 'An Offer One Might Prefer to Refuse: The Systems Theoretical Legacy of Niklas Luhmann', *European Journal of Social Theory* 3(3): 339-54.
- Butler, Judith (1999) 'Performativity's Social Magic', in Richard Shusterman (ed) *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 113-28.
- Buzelin, Helene (2005) 'Translation Studies, Ethnography and the Production of Knowledge', in Paul St-Pierre and Prufulla C. Kar (eds) *In Translation: Reflections, Refractions, Transformations*, New Delhi: Pencraft International, 25-41.
- Calhoun, Craig (1995) *Critical Social Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- , Edward Li Puma and Moishe Postone (eds) (1993) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Clifford, James (1983) 'On Ethnographic Authority', *Representations* 1(2): 118-46.
- (1986) 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1-26.
- and George E. Marcus (eds) (1986) *Writing Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Crapanzano, Vincent (1986) 'Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 51-76.
- Cronin, Michael (2003) *Translation and Globalization*, London: Routledge.
- Garfinkel, Harold (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- (1986) 'The Uses of Diversity', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 25(1): 105-23.
- Goodenough, Walter (1964) 'Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics', in Dell Hymes (ed) *Language in Culture and Society*, New York: Harper & Row, 36-39.
- Gouanvic, Jean-Marc (2002) 'A Model of Structuralist Constructivism in Translation Studies', in Theo Hermans (ed) *Crosscultural Transgressions*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 93-102.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1985) 'Questions and Counterquestions', in Richard Bernstein (ed) *Habermas and Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 192-216.
- Hermans, Theo (1999) *Translation in Systems*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Inghilleri, Moira (2003) 'Habitus, Field and Discourse: Interpreting as a Socially Situated Activity', *Target* 15(2): 243-68.
- Jenkins, Richard (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu*, Revised Edition, London: Routledge.
- Lee III, Orville (1988) 'Observations on Anthropological Thinking about the Culture Concept: Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 33: 115-30.

- Luhmann, Niklas (1995) *Social Systems*, trans. John Bednarz, Jr., with Dirk Baecker, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Marcus, George E. (1998) *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini (1992) *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rabinow, Paul (1986) 'Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 234-61.
- and Herbert Dreyfuss (1999) 'Can There Be a Science of Existential Structure and Social Meaning?', in Richard Shusterman (ed) *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 113-28.
- Rasch, William (2000) *Niklas Luhmann's Modernity*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Robinson, Douglas (1997) *Translation and Empire*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet (2000) 'The Suspended Potential of Culture in Translation Studies', *Target* 12(2): 345-55.
- Simeoni, Daniel (1998) 'The Pivotal Status of the Translator's Habitus', *Target* 10(1): 1-39.
- (2005) 'Translation and Society: The Emergence of a Conceptual Relationship', in Paul St-Pierre and Prufulla C. Kar (eds) *In Translation: Reflections, Refractions, Transformations*, New Delhi: Pencraft International, 3-14.
- Spencer, Jonathan (2001) 'Ethnography after Postmodernism', in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (eds) *Handbook of Ethnography*, Sage: London, 443-52.
- Sperber, Dan (1985) *On Anthropological Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sturge, Kate (1997) 'Translation Strategies in Ethnography', *The Translator* 3(1): 21-38.
- Tyler, Steven A. (1986) 'Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 122-40.
- Tymoczko, Maria (1999) 'Post-colonial Writing and Literary Translation', in Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (eds) *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, 19-40.
- Wolf, Michaela (2002) 'Culture as Translation – and Beyond Ethnographic Models of Representation in Translation Studies', in Theo Hermans (ed) *Crosscultural Transgressions*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 180-92.