WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGY APPLIED TO TRANSLATION BE LIKE?

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"Penseu que el mirall de la veritat s'esmicolà a l'origen en fragments petitíssims, i cada un dels trossos recull tanmateix una engruna d'autèntica llum".

Salvador Espriu (1948)

"Remember that the mirror of truth was shattered in the beginning into tiny fragments, and yet each bit reflects a spark of genuine light".

Salvador Espriu,
traducció de Philip Polack (1989)

Most of the usual definitions of Sociology consider it to be a discipline that deals with the systematic study of human societies, following the accepted rules of scientific methodology. It is also common to emphasise that this is not a unitary science, but rather a way of dealing with the collective side of human phenomena. This circumstance becomes especially apparent in the wide range of topics that could be addressed, as well as the number of approaches and applicable methods. Thus, if you look at the list of thematic areas covered by the committees of the International Sociological Association, you can expect to find areas such as the Sociology of Religion, the Sociology of Health or the Sociology of Education, alongside others such as the Sociology of Science, the Sociology of the Arts, and Sociocybernetics, Social Psychology or Social Indicators. In fact, its current list of 55 subject areas is not intended to be closed and conclusive and, therefore, you may want to add on the Sociology of Knowledge, Ethnomethodology, Sociobiology or even the Sociology of Sociology, among many other possibilities. Some scholars suggest that, properly

speaking, it would be more appropriate to consider Sociology as a *bundle of disciplines*. At the end of the day, it is very common to refer to *a sociological glimpse*, which can be diverse, focus on the most varied dimensions of human activity and, indeed, it is easily seen to pervade several other disciplines.

The aim of this monographic issue is to bring together several sociological glimpses of the field of Translation Studies. To stress this fact, we have entitled it "Sociology Applied to Translation" (SAT). This label was chosen because we sought to highlight the opportunity to attract resources, methods and tools from other epistemological areas (those of the social sciences) and perform a selective appropriation of them for our disciplinary field. Indeed, SAT could be constructed by integrating and interpreting selected theories and methodologies. We could build the structure upon the social ontology by Pierre Bourdieu, use the lights provided by the Sociology of Professions to illuminate the reasons, versions and effects of evolution and involution of occupational groups such as ours, establish paths between the plots by following the action-research of Kurt Lewin, adapting and linking theories, methods and applications to get involved in the world and improve it, or to sit down and listen to it and listen to ourselves with a *dramaturgical perspective* in the style of Erving Goffman or with Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology… It would definitely be an attractive technique for building a theoretical and methodological body that would be applicable to the phenomena of translation and interpretation where the leading characters are the agents and their coexistence.

Note that appropriation as a means of growth is nothing new to us or, for that matter, to many others. In the purest anthropophagic style of De Andrade, Translation Studies has already digested what appeared to be productive from the fields of Linguistics, Literature, Studies on Cognition and Computing. The fundamental difference with respect to the previous examples is that in all these cases, Translation had already in some way been an object of interest and productive study. In the field of Sociology, however, this circumstance has not occurred (at least not with the same intensity), except for some worthy exceptions, such as the work of Heinich (1984) or the monograph by Rodriguez Morató (1997) about the professional circumstances of translators of books; also the articles contained in the monographic volume on *Traduction: les échanges littéraires internationaux* in issue 144 (2002) of the journal founded by Bourdieu entitled *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. Other exceptions include diverse works about the directionality of exchanges of cultural products, such as the one by Sapiro, and some work concerning the management of multilingualism, such as that of Colomer (1996), which

contains a rather interesting application of Game Theory. Paradoxically, there is a sociologically-oriented approach called *Sociology of Translation* (also known as *Actor-Network Theory*) that is not directly concerned with what the title suggests at first glance (cf. e.g. Akrich, Callon & Latour 2006), although its applicability to the study of language management processes is far from negligible, as shown by works such as that of Buzelin (2005).

This absorption of propositions from sociology has enabled Translation Studies to furnish itself with relevant and inspiring works. Some remarkably interesting papers in the field of interpretation, like those by Angelelli (2004), Wadensjö (1998), García (2002) or Kahane (1986), are steeped in Erving Goffman's micro-sociological programme, which is aimed at clarifying the structure of the interaction between two or more individuals when they are both physically present, and Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology, directly related to the work of the conversationalists (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson).

The aims of the Sociology of Language, Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Planning obviously converge in some areas with those of Translation Studies. This is especially true with regard to the study of the role to be played by interlinguistic management practices in the normalisation of subordinate languages, standardisation and the role of linguistic mediators as encoders, which is evidenced in works such as those by Corbeil (1992), Cronin (1995), Niska (1998), Aragüés (1988), Millán-Valera (2000), Paquin (2000), Xirinacs (1997), Baxter (2002), Diaz, García & Carreras (2002), Jaffe (1999), and Erkazanci (2008). The introduction to Branchadell & West (2005) presents an interesting list of papers and monographic works dealing with some of these aspects, and the same volume contains a large number of studies that exemplify them.

From the so-called Sociology of Communication (in itself a disciplinary intersection under construction) we have received notions such as that of the *gatekeeper* (Lewin 1947), used in works such as those by Vuorinen (1997), Fujii (1988), Hursti (2001) or Hautanen (2006), and sometimes overlapping with sociolinguistic approaches, such as in Davidson (2000). It must not be forgotten, however, that some theoretical instruments produced in the field of Communication Studies can be traced back to work with a clearly defined Translation Studies profile, such as what is known as Lasswell's paradigm, which is almost certainly not too far removed from some of the elements present in Nord (1988), albeit only implicitly.

The Sociology of Professions, an area that is chiefly English-speaking and with chronologically and conceptually distant proposals, is gaining momentum in Translation Studies, in relation to both translation and interpretation.

Proof of this is the latest volume of *Translation and Interpreting Studies* (Sela-Sheffy & Shlesinger 2009), but, as noted by Turner (2007: 181) for the case of interpretation, "The aspiration of theorising and practically realising the key features of an interpreting profession […] has been central to the field in various forms for many years". This sociological glimpse has been part of the pool of knowledge in our discipline since the unpublished master's thesis by Tseng (1992), cited in Mikkelson (2001). And the perspectives adopted in its evolution from the feature approach (introduced into our field in Tseng 1992, or Rudvin 2007) to the more recent systemic glimpse (applied in Monzó 2002, 2003) have been represented in our discipline.

However, the proposal that has undoubtedly attracted most attention from researchers in Translation Studies is the economics of practice by Pierre Bourdieu, whose studies reflected a certain amount of interest in the impact of translation activity on the social fields. In our disciplinary neighbourhood, from the earliest contributions that worked primarily with the key concepts of field (Gouanvic 1997) and habitus (Simeoni 1998), the number of contributions which have applied parts of Bourdieu's ontology has increased sharply in recent years (Gouanvic 1999, Wolf 2002, Inghilleri 2003, Sapiro 2003, Sela-Sheffy 2005, Thoutenhoofd 2005, Gouanvic 2007, Heilbron & Sapiro 2007, Wolf 2007b). Indeed, the degree to which researchers in translation/interpreting feel that this framework fulfils their objectives has led to the publication of monographs using Bourdieu's ideas as a shared theoretical background, an example being the work published by Inghilleri in 2005, which contained contributions focused mainly on literary translation and interpretation (Blommaert 2005, Buzelin 2005, Gouanvic 2005, Hanna 2005, Inghilleri 2005b, Thoutenhoofd 2005, Vidal Claramonte 2005). In this volume, you will also find proposals that are based on the application of this model and which adopt different objects of study, together with others that use the foundations of Bourdieu's ontology in a less direct way to explain social states and processes.

As we see it, the possibility of actually constructing a field like SAT (without going into futile nominalistic discussions) means necessarily first acknowledging the fact that the *varied* nature of the contributions included within this framework very probably has to do with the very diversity of methods and instruments, goals and approaches of the sociological glimpse. From this standpoint, we understand that the range of possible sociological approaches to Translation Studies is not circumstantial, but reflects the very nature of this perspective. If we accept that the functionalist approach by Talcott Parsons is no less sociological than Oswald Wilson's Sociobiology, it does

not seem very legitimate to claim that the studies on interpretation inspired in micro-sociology are any less representative of a hypothetical Sociology of Translation than the application of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and symbolic capital to the analysis of the translation of American science fiction or the sociolinguistic argument that communities which use minority languages have to practise forms of compulsory translation in order to gain access to international markets. Of course, it is absolutely legitimate to hypothesise the existence of *a* Sociology of Translation in the strict sense of the word, to attempt to delimit the scope of a sociological approach that is *useful* to explain phenomena related to translation (as does, for example, Pym 2006) or to describe and to configure the scientific space of a Sociology of Translation (sometimes with direct references to a hypothetical *social turn* or even a *Sociology of Translation Studies*), as is the case of Chesterman (2006), Gambier (2006), Pöchhacker (2006) or Wolf (2006, 2007) (Wolf's contribution in this volume challenges this option). In any case, for the time being, this is not the aim of the editors of the volume you now have in your hands.

This volume has no intention whatsoever to cover all the possible views at our disposal as a disciplinary field or to summarise *a* hypothetical "Sociology of Translation". Based on the idea that theoretical, methodological and sometimes even epistemological perspectives are different, coexistent and equally subject to the dictates of scientific method, the aim of this volume is to highlight the interest in learning more about what sociology can tell us when we invite it round to our place. The danger, however, is obvious: building a branch of our studies on borrowed foundations could lead us to a scattered collection of isolated ideas. The efforts made to gather research works, like the one proposed in this second issue of *MonTI*, provide models, methods, data and contexts that help us understand the multifaceted phenomena of translation and interpretation, and constitute an invitation to keep on with the collective construction of the space for SAT with new proposals that expand even further the diversity of contexts, data and conclusions, which make it possible to share the same theoretical models for evaluating hypotheses in other contexts, to follow the same methods for different purposes, to accumulate new data from different populations or to raise new questions about the conclusions that are put forward. It becomes essential to grasp the worldview provided by the different sociological theories and test their validity for our field. We need more studies that share the framework and that allow us to see whether the hypotheses remain valid beyond moments in time, territorial spaces or social agents. We are sure this collection will inspire you to continue and replicate research studies, and we hope that this inspiration may become

a collective task performed by our area in order to further the evolution of SAT.

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