

The Initiation of the Sociological Dimension of Translation into  
Greek Translation Programmes.

إدماج البعد السوسيولوجي للترجمة في برامج تعليم الترجمة باليونان

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**Abstract:**

Over the last decades, Translation Studies has evolved from a predominantly linguistic and text-oriented discipline into a multifaceted field that incorporates cultural, ideological and social perspectives. Among these developments, the sociological dimension of translation has gained increasing prominence, foregrounding translators as social agents embedded in institutions, power relations and professional networks. Despite this theoretical shift, translation training programmes often remain largely focused on linguistic competence and technical skills. This paper argues for the systematic integration of the sociological dimension of translation into Greek translation programmes. Drawing on key sociological approaches in Translation Studies, such as Bourdieu’s theory of practice, the sociology of professions, and actor-network theory—the paper examines the current state of translation education in Greece and highlights existing gaps between theory, professional reality and pedagogy. It then proposes concrete ways in which sociological perspectives can be incorporated into curricula, enhancing students’ critical awareness, professional identity and adaptability to the contemporary translation market. Ultimately, the paper suggests that embedding the

sociological dimension in Greek translation programmes is essential for training reflective practitioners capable of navigating the complex social realities of translation in a globalised world.

**Keywords:** translator training; the sociology of translation; teaching methodology; critical competence.

## Introduction

Translation Studies has undergone significant transformations since its emergence as an autonomous academic discipline in the second half of the twentieth century. Early approaches were primarily concerned with equivalence, linguistic transfer and textual analysis, reflecting the influence of structural linguistics and comparative philology (Munday, 2016). While these perspectives contributed substantially to the consolidation of the field, they gradually proved insufficient for explaining translation as a socially situated practice. From the 1980s onwards, cultural and descriptive approaches challenged purely linguistic models by emphasising norms, systems and power relations (Toury, 1995; Lefevere, 1992). Building on this shift, the sociological turn in Translation Studies further expanded the scope of inquiry by focusing on translators, institutions, markets and professional practices.

In this context, the sociological dimension of translation refers to the study of translation as a social activity shaped by agents,

structures, ideologies and material conditions. Translators are no longer viewed merely as neutral mediators between texts and languages, but as actors whose decisions are influenced by their habitus, professional trajectories and socio-economic constraints (Bourdieu, 1990; Gouanvic, 2005). This perspective has significant implications not only for research, but also for translation pedagogy.

Despite the growing recognition of sociological approaches in academic research, translation training programmes—particularly in Greece—tend to prioritise linguistic competence, specialised terminology and technological tools. While these components are undeniably essential, they often marginalise broader questions related to professional status, ethics, power relations and market dynamics. As a result, graduates may possess strong technical skills but lack critical awareness of the social conditions shaping their work.

This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring how the sociological dimension of translation can be systematically inserted into Greek translation programmes. It first outlines the theoretical foundations of the sociology of translation within Translation Studies. It then examines the current landscape of translation education in Greece, identifying key strengths and limitations. Finally, it proposes pedagogical strategies for

integrating sociological perspectives into curricula, arguing that such integration is crucial for preparing students for the realities of the translation profession.

## **1. Conceptualising the Sociological Dimension of Translation**

### **1.1 Translation as Social Practice**

Viewing translation as a social practice entails recognising that translational activity is embedded within specific social contexts. These contexts include institutional settings, professional networks, economic markets and ideological frameworks. Translators operate within constraints that shape not only what is translated, but also how and why it is translated (Chesterman, 2009).

This perspective challenges the traditional image of the translator as an isolated linguistic expert. Instead, translators are seen as participants in socially organised practices, whose work is influenced by clients, publishers, editors, agencies and technological infrastructures. Understanding translation as social practice thus requires analytical tools capable of capturing these complex interactions.

### **1.2 Norms, Power and Ideology**

The sociological dimension also foregrounds the role of norms and power relations in translation. Toury's (1995) concept of translational norms already pointed to the social regulation of

translation behaviour. Sociological approaches build on this insight by examining how norms are produced, maintained and contested within specific fields.

Power relations are particularly salient in contexts where translation mediates between dominant and peripheral languages or cultures. In such cases, translators may be compelled to conform to hegemonic expectations, reinforcing asymmetrical relations (Venuti, 1995). From a pedagogical standpoint, raising awareness of these dynamics is essential for developing ethically informed practitioners.

## **2. Key Sociological Frameworks in Translation Studies**

### **2.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Practice Revisited**

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework has been instrumental in shaping the sociology of translation. His concept of *habitus* explains how translators internalise professional norms through education and practice. This internalisation often leads to unconscious conformity, making sociological reflection particularly important in translator training.

The concept of *field* allows researchers to analyse translation as a structured space of positions, where agents compete for symbolic and economic capital. For students, understanding translation as a field can demystify professional hierarchies and

reveal the mechanisms through which legitimacy is constructed.

## **2.2 The Sociology of Professions and Translation**

The sociology of professions offers valuable insights into the status and recognition of translators. Studies in this area examine issues such as accreditation, professional ethics and labour conditions (Dam & Zethsen, 2011). In many countries, including Greece, translators face challenges related to low status, lack of regulation and precarious employment.

Incorporating this perspective into translation programmes can help students critically assess their professional environment. It also encourages collective awareness and engagement with professional associations, which are crucial for improving working conditions.

## **2.3 Actor-Network Theory and Technological Mediation**

Actor-network theory (ANT) expands the sociological analysis of translation by including non-human actors such as software tools, platforms and institutional protocols. Translation technologies are not neutral instruments; they shape workflows, decision-making processes and professional identities (Buzelin, 2005).

Given the increasing reliance on CAT tools and machine translation, ANT is particularly relevant for contemporary translator training. Students must learn to critically engage with

technology rather than simply adopt it unreflectively.

### **3. Translation Education in Greece: A Critical Examination**

#### **3.1 Historical Development of Translation Programmes in Greece**

Translation education in Greece developed relatively late compared to other European countries. Initially embedded within philological departments, translation training was often subordinate to language and literature studies. Over time, specialised programmes emerged, reflecting the growing demand for professional translators.

Despite this progress, the legacy of philological traditions continues to shape curricula, often privileging textual analysis over professional and sociological considerations.

#### **3.2 Curriculum Analysis and Sociological Absences**

A critical examination of Greek translation curricula reveals a strong emphasis on language pairs, specialised translation and technology. Courses explicitly addressing the social dimension of translation—such as professional ethics, sociology of translation or translation policy—are relatively rare.

When sociological issues are addressed, they are often treated implicitly or superficially. This limits students' ability to develop a coherent understanding of translation as a socially situated

profession.

### **3.3 Student Expectations and Market Realities**

Many students enter translation programmes with idealised expectations about the profession. Without sociological training, they may be unprepared for the realities of freelance work, including unstable income, negotiation with clients and limited institutional support.

Integrating sociological perspectives can help align educational outcomes with market realities, reducing the gap between academic training and professional practice.

## **4. Pedagogical Benefits of Sociological Integration**

### **4.1 Reflexive Professional Identity**

One of the key pedagogical benefits of integrating the sociological dimension is the development of reflexive professional identity. Reflexivity enables students to critically examine their own assumptions, values and positionality within the translation field (Kiraly, 2014). Rather than passively adopting existing norms, reflexive practitioners can negotiate their professional roles more consciously and ethically.

### **4.2 Empowerment and Agency**

Sociological awareness can empower students by making visible the structures that shape their professional lives.

Understanding power relations does not imply resignation; rather, it provides the tools for strategic action and collective organisation.

This empowerment is particularly important in contexts of economic uncertainty, such as the Greek translation market.

## **5. Concrete Pedagogical Models for Greek Translation Programmes**

### **5.1 Dedicated Courses on Sociology of Translation**

Introducing standalone courses on the sociology of translation would allow for systematic engagement with theoretical frameworks and empirical research. These courses could be offered at advanced undergraduate or postgraduate level.

### **5.2 Integration into Practical Translation Courses**

Alternatively, sociological perspectives can be embedded within practical translation courses. For example, students could analyse translation briefs not only linguistically, but also in terms of institutional constraints and power relations.

### **5.3 Project-Based and Collaborative Learning**

Project-based learning encourages students to engage with real-world translation scenarios. Collaborative projects simulate professional environments, highlighting the social dynamics of teamwork, negotiation and responsibility.

## **6. Assessment Methods and Learning Outcomes**

### **6.1 Assessing Sociological Competence**

Traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture sociological learning outcomes. Reflective journals, case study analyses and research projects can provide more appropriate means of evaluation.

### **6.2 Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes related to the sociological dimension may include: Critical understanding of the translation profession, awareness of ethical and social responsibility, and ability to analyse translation within institutional contexts.

## **7. Potential Obstacles and Institutional Constraints**

### **7.1 Curriculum Rigidity**

One major obstacle to integrating sociological perspectives is curriculum rigidity. Degree structures may leave little room for new courses, necessitating creative integration strategies.

### **7.2 Instructor Training and Expertise**

Effective teaching of sociological approaches requires instructors with appropriate theoretical background. Professional development and interdisciplinary collaboration can address this challenge.

## **8. Translation Training, Globalisation and the Greek Context**

Globalisation has intensified cross-cultural communication and increased demand for translation services. At the same time, it has exacerbated inequalities within the profession. Greek translation programmes must prepare students to operate within this globalised environment while remaining sensitive to local conditions.

The sociological dimension provides a framework for understanding these global-local dynamics, making it particularly relevant for contemporary translator education.

### **Conclusion**

The integration of the sociological dimension of translation into Greek translation programmes represents a necessary evolution in translator education. By moving beyond purely linguistic and technical training, programmes can equip students with the critical tools needed to navigate the complex social realities of the translation profession.

This extended analysis has demonstrated that sociological approaches offer valuable insights into professional identity, power relations, ethical responsibility and technological mediation. Embedding these perspectives into curricula can enhance both academic rigour and professional relevance.

Ultimately, inserting the sociological dimension into translation training is not merely an additive process, but a transformative one. It reshapes how translation is understood, taught and practiced, contributing to the formation of reflective, empowered and socially responsible translators.

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