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*Araştırma Makalesi*

## LOW SOCIAL STATUS, HIGH INDIVIDUAL STATUS: TURKISH TRANSLATORS IN THE STATE AND PRIVATE SECTORS<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

*The translation literature indicates a negative perception regarding the translator status and the translation profession. This study aims to explore how the state and private sector translators' social, symbolic, cultural capital and translatorial habitus are related to their self-perceptions of status as a professional group in Turkey. With this aim in mind, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with thirteen translators who work in the state and private sectors in Turkey. The results of the interviews are discussed in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts of capital and habitus. According to the findings of the study, translation is not still a fully established profession in Turkey. The findings also indicate that translators don't assign the same value to all the capital forms. Especially the possession of a distinctive cultural capital in an unregulated field leads them to develop a professional habitus of proud, satisfied, committed experts. In light of the qualitative findings this study argues that the social negative narratives regarding the translation profession in Turkey clash with the translators' personal narratives in terms of their social, symbolic, cultural capital and translatorial habitus.*

**Keywords:** *Translator Status, Status Perception, Habitus, Capital*

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## DÜŞÜK TOPLUMSAL STATÜ, YÜKSEK BİREYSEL STATÜ: TÜRKİYE'DE KAMU VE ÖZEL SEKTÖR ÇEVİRMENLERİ

### Öz

Çeviribilim araştırmalarında çevirmen statüsü ve çevirmenlik mesleğine ilişkin olumsuz bir algı söz konusudur. Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de özel sektörde ve kamu sektöründe çalışan çevirmenlerin bir meslek grubu olarak statülerine yönelik öz algılarının sosyal, sembolik, kültürel sermayeleri ve çevirmen habituslarıyla ilişkisini araştırmaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, özel sektörde ve kamu sektöründe çalışan toplam 13 çevirmen ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu görüşmelerin verileri Pierre Bourdieu’nun habitus ve sermaye kavramları ışığında incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, Türkiye’de çevirmenlikte meslekleşme süreci tamamlanmış değildir. Ayrıca araştırma sonuçları, çevirmenlerin farklı sermaye türlerine eşit derecede değer vermediklerine işaret etmektedir. Özellikle düzenlemelerin eksik olduğu bir alanda ayırt edici bir kültürel sermayeye sahip olmaları, çevirmenlerin işiyle gurur duyun, iş tatmini yüksek, kendini mesleğe adanmış uzman şeklinde bir mesleki habitus geliştirmesine yol açmaktadır. Araştırma Türkiye’de çevirmenlik mesleğine ilişkin olumsuz toplumsal anlamların, çevirmenlerin sosyal, sembolik, kültürel ve çevirmenlik habitusları açısından kişisel anlatıları ile çatışmakta olduğunu savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Çevirmen Statüsü, Statü Algısı, Habitus, Sermaye

### INTRODUCTION

Translation Studies have mainly focused on the translation product or the translation process whereas the agents of the translation act, the translators, have attracted less attention. However, along with the emergence of the “sociological turn” and the “power turn” in the 2000s the focus of Translation Studies has changed (Wolf, 2014, p. 7). Scholars doing research in Translation Studies have emphasized the importance of studying the sociological aspects of translation and a number of researchers have suggested new theoretical frameworks to explain the relations between translators, translation and the contexts in which translation activities take place (Inghilleri, 2005; Chesterman, 2006; Wolf, 2006, 2011). Specifically, Bourdieu’s framework has been accepted as a suitable sociological perspective to explain the social settings where translation activities take place and to study the social issues in the translation world (Gouanvic, 1999, p. 17).

Along with the increasing academic interest in sociological perspectives, questions of agents’ positions, identity and status have become the spotlight in Translation Studies. According to Dam and Zethsen (2008), the discussions about the status of the translators have one common feature, which is the assumption that translation is a peripheral, insignificant and poorly paid occupation and that translators, as an occupational group, are mostly invisible, powerless and subservient. The researchers, doing quantitative studies in various settings, have confirmed this argument to a certain extent by analysing the status among different groups. Such empirical studies indicate that translation is not considered a prestigious

profession both among translators and in society. Dam ve Zethsen's studies (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) in Denmark show that even translators who work in companies, translation agencies or the European Union have a low status perception although they possess a high professional profile. Similar to the results in Denmark, Katan's quantitative study (2009) which covers a few countries has revealed that professional translators, academicians and translation students consider translator status as low and middling. Ruokonen (2016) also states that translation students are of the opinion that the society does not recognize the necessary expertise required to conduct the profession and that translators have a middling status. On the other hand, research has shown that some subprofessional groups have a higher status perception. Literary translators are considered to have a higher status when compared to the other groups (Ruokonen ve Mäkisalo, 2018) and they even put some effort to increase their status by building certain identities (Sela-Sheffy, 2010).

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, the present study sets out to contribute to the plethora of studies related to the status of translators and the state of the translation profession by studying how translators' economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital and their translatorial habitus are related to their perception of status. With this aim, this study strives to analyze qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with thirteen translators who are currently working in the private and state sectors in Turkey. The qualitative approach made it possible to have a deeper understanding about translators' points of view in relation to their perceived status through open-ended and follow-up questions which helped translators to express their reasons for their answers and share their opinions (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). All the interviews were conducted within a three-month period which started in 2018 and ended in 2019.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In translation research, the word 'status' generally refers to occupational prestige, professionalization or whether a profession has become a fully recognized one or not, and the situation of a person performing a job in a specific context (Ruokonen, 2013, p. 328). This study aims to analyze translators' self-perceptions of status from the perspective of prestige attached to the translation profession (Volvi, 2008, p. 171-173).

Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of capital and habitus have been chosen in this research to understand the factors that influence the status perceptions of translators working in the state and private sectors in Turkey. These key concepts cannot be separated from each other as they are interrelated (Gouanvic, 2005, p. 148). Therefore, in this study, the translators' habitus is analyzed together with their economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. It is further discussed if the type of capital they have gained has, in the end, caused them to develop a specific

translational habitus and how these two together in turn are related to their perceptions of status.

According to Bourdieu the social world is organized in fields: a field is a system of social relations in which the agents try to accumulate various types of capital in order to strengthen their position (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 76). Bourdieu introduces the economic capital, cultural capital and social capital as three types of capital which an individual can accumulate. The more capital one has the more powerful will be their position in the field. All three capital types are convertible into each other, and into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital is defined as social agent's mean and ability to act in a field (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). To enter a field, the agents first need to be equipped with a certain amount of capital and to survive in the field, they need to obtain different capitals, which as a result determines translators' status given that "[c]apital also determines the social agents' position in the field" (Heino, 2017, p. 54). Therefore, the agents want to keep the capital they have and enrich it. It does not matter which type of capital the agents have as it offers new positions and statuses in the relevant field (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 395).

The economic capital refers to material and monetary assets possessed by the agents. Bourdieu states that the economic capital is "at the root of all other types of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 54) since all other forms of capital can usually be accumulated through economic capital, or vice versa (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47).

Another form of capital, cultural capital, exists in three different forms: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 1986). The embodied state refers to long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body like skills, knowledge, taste etc. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47) whereas the objectified state refers to cultural goods like pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 50). In its institutionalized state, the cultural capital refers to academic qualifications which prove the agents' cultural knowledge and can bring various benefits with it.

The third form of capital is social capital. Bourdieu defines social capital as "the network of connections" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) and "social membership in a group" (1986, p. 246). This form of capital helps the agents to reinforce their position, power and status in a field where such connections are valued (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51).

Lastly, Bourdieu states that all three types of capital may turn into symbolic capital if they are acknowledged as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17). That means symbolic capital is the value which is assigned to the other three capitals. If one form of capital in a specific field is recognized as valuable, the one holding that specific capital will have accordingly a higher status. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is "a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and

honorability” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 291). This form of capital enables the agents to become recognized actors in their field and have an influence on the value of their products (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21). In addition, symbolic capital is required so as to hold the power that agents have in their fields and those agents with symbolic capital are able to build, influence and control people’s perceptions and beliefs (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21).

A translator’s accumulation of capital and his translatorial habitus are interrelated. As one of the well known concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, habitus is a system which continuously changes, adjusts and transforms itself according to our experiences of the social world and situations in which we find ourselves (Bourdieu 1994, p. 170). Habitus is composed of the whole socialized individual, all the learnt individual inner models which control human behaviour and thinking. Such models are socially and culturally learned, gained and formed unconsciously by adapting to the nearby social structures throughout a lifetime (Heino, 2017, p. 54). As Simeoni has underlined: “[t]he habitus of a translator is the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history” (Simeoni, 1998, p. 32). Habitus incorporates all individual tastes, interests, skills, habits, actions, thinking and lifestyles, and thus capital (Meylaerts 2010, p. 1-2). Within the framework of translation studies, the structured and structuring characteristic of habitus makes it possible to examine the behaviours of translators (Liang, 2016, p. 42). Heino says that “Habitus and capital go hand in hand because capital helps to shape habitus and capital is put into operation through habitus” (2017, p. 54).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews was adopted in this study. Thirteen translators were identified by using purposive sampling. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable a researcher to answer his/her research questions. Among different purposive sampling alternatives, maximum variation sampling, also known as heterogeneous sampling, is the choice which suits this study well as it is used to seize different perspectives relating to the study. The first step in maximum variation sampling is to determine the criteria for identifying the sample (Patton, 2002, p. 235). The only criteria for the respondents was that they should be working either in the private or state sector in Turkey as translators. Patton emphasizes that the size of the research relies on the aim, time and resources of the study (2002, p. 244) and therefore there are no principles regarding size in qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, seven translators from the state sector and six from the private sector were chosen in order to answer my research question.

Mainly open-ended questions were used in the interviews so as to derive meaning from the translators’ responses about their status perceptions as open-ended questions allow the interviewees to explain the reasons for their answers to the closed-ended questions and to share their additional opinions (Saldanha and

O'Brien, 2014). The data-collecting instrument for this research made it possible for the interviewees to share their points of view and discuss issues in relation to their status and to understand how they share their perceptions about their status as professionals and probe more information and clarification of answers. Following completion of the interviews, as Patton states that a researcher should grab the real meaning behind the words of an interviewee (Patton, 2002, p. 380), the interviews were carefully transcribed in order to include as many features as possible of actual speech to allow a very careful analysis and access to interviewees' viewpoints.

To organize and elicit meaning from the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions and to draw conclusions from it, deductive content analysis was used. The qualitative data gathered was analyzed from the perspective of Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus. The translators' different forms of capital and their habitus are discussed to see if they have an influence on the translators' self-perceptions of status.

### **TRANSLATION AS A PROFESSION**

According to Millerson, professionalization is the process in which a profession attains the full traits of a profession (2001, p. 10). The first trait of a profession stated in previous research is "specialized skills" based on theoretical/advanced knowledge. This trait is linked to "education/training" necessary to perform a profession. Institutionalized cultural capital, as one state of Bourdieu's cultural capital, could be discussed as a significant indicator of professionalization. In Bourdieu's terms, institutionalized cultural capital that an agent has, such as a diploma, a certificate or a license, gives "a legally guaranteed value with respect to culture" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 50) and it could be converted into economic capital, which might also determine the agent's status among the others in the market (1986, p. 51).

Although education/training is one of the traits attributed to professionalism, the importance/role of training on the translation market is still unclear. OPTIMALE's survey of employers which covered mainly translation companies, international organizations and government departments (Toudic, 2012, p. 6) shows that professional experience is regarded slightly more important than an academic degree (88% of the employers see experience as important or essential whereas 78% of them believe that academic degree in translation is essential or very important). Expertise and knowledge accumulated through experience, as two other forms of cultural capital, could be regarded more important and valuable than an academic degree and these two may also affect one's translatorial habitus.

The second trait used as a reference to distinguish an occupation from a profession is "the competence of professionals measured by examinations". From Bourdieu's perspective, similar to the previous trait, this trait could also be related to the institutionalized form of cultural capital. Bourdieu states that "by conferring

institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any given agent, the academic qualification also makes it possible to compare qualification holders” (1986, p. 51).

The third trait of professionalization is the existence of a “professional organization that organizes members”. In many studies, such organizations are considered to have a significant role in increasing the status of the profession (Pym et al. 2012, p. 33; Uysal et al. 2015, p. 260; Ruokonen, 2016, p. 204). When an agent becomes a member of a group, which means accumulating social capital, s/he may attain more acquaintance and recognition, which, in turn, gives the agents “credentials” that provide them with credit (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). The social connections that agents make thanks to being a member of such associations constitute an agent’s social capital and this form of capital helps them to improve their position in the field. Translators’ trustworthiness could increase because they are a member of a specific association as such an association may ask for certain membership criteria, such as educational qualifications or a certain number of years of experience (Pym, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, membership of a professional association could be considered as a factor which contributes to translators’ status in the sector, which makes them socially recognized in the sector and therefore contributes to their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 53).

### **Professionalization of the Translation Activity in Turkey**

In a similar vein to the growing interest on the state of the translation profession all around the world, the efforts on the professionalization of translation in Turkey are increasing, as well. Debate on the state of the profession is growing mainly because translation as a profession is gaining more importance as a result of the increasing number of economic, commercial, socio-cultural and political activities and Turkey’s EU adaptation process (Prime Ministry’s Report, 2015, p.4, p. 50).

Since the mid-1980s, the number of translation degree programs in Turkey has increased. Currently, there are many higher education institutions which offer four-year long translation and interpreting programs. However, the “anyone-can-do-it” approach is still very common in the translation sector due to the lack of legislation. In Turkey, despite the large numbers of translation degree programs, there are no institutionalized set of rules to govern the entry into the translation field. Students who are trained as a translator and interpreter and those who finish their undergraduate studies in a foreign-language department, or anyone with a knowledge of a foreign language can be employed in the translation market. According to the Prime Ministry’s Report, only half of the total 20.000 translators in the market are “qualified translators” with a degree in translation as there is no legislation regulating the market (Prime Ministry’s Report, 2015, p. 50). There is a need for legislation in Turkey which sets the framework for the roles and rights of translators (Eruz, 2012, p. 22) in order for the translators to strengthen their position

in the field. Under these circumstances, in recent years, translators, academicians and translator associations together with state institutions have made significant efforts towards professionalization of the translational activity and elevating its status (Eruz, 2012). These different stakeholders in the market have started discussing establishing a legal framework, determining occupational standards and qualifications, certification, and improving working conditions so as to make translation to achieve the status it deserves (Parlak, 2012). These different stakeholders pursue the development of occupational standards, qualifications and assessment criteria under the supervision of the Vocational Qualifications Authority of Turkey (Prime Ministry's Report, 2015, p. 25).

Another occupational indicator that is linked to the degree of professionalization and which could increase the symbolic power of the translators as individuals and as a collective are associations founded with a view to defending the rights of professionals. In the last twenty years, some associations, such as The Association of Conference Interpreters of Turkey (*Türkiye Konferans Çevirmenleri Derneği*, TKDK), the translators' Association of Turkey (*Türkiye Çevirmenler Derneği*, TÜCED), and The Translation and Interpreting Association of Turkey (*Çeviri Derneği*) have been founded in Turkey to make the standards of the translation profession better and help translators gain more status. These associations could be a good example which enable their members to acquire not only economic capital but also symbolic capital through the network of qualified interpreters and different job opportunities. However, the professional associations in Turkey are criticised for not having close contact with each other (Özaydın, 2012, p. 64), not cooperating and communicating more efficiently to carry out strategic planning towards claiming professional status (Kartal, 2012, p. 41) and not offering a national examination or certification, which are considered as the necessary indicators of professionalisation (Prime Ministry's Report, 2015). Therefore it is not surprising that although the number of such associations for translators and interpreters, and translation companies in Turkey has been increasing, the number of members of these associations is not high (Eruz, 2012, p. 18).

The increasing number of university-based training programs, new initiatives taken to regulate the market, and the establishment of several translators' associations indicate that there has been considerable progress in the efforts to improve the degree of professionalization in translation in Turkey. But so far those efforts seem to have not yielded the expected results yet. Currently, both state and private sector translators are experiencing serious problems in the translation sector in Turkey. The state sector translators are employed under the category of General Administration Services (GİH), which places them in the same category as civil servants with an associate degree and thus forces them to provide administration services (Uysal, 2017, p. 149). The translators in the private sector work without a contract and they are pressurized by deadlines, heavy workload and low fees. In such a situation, employers look for translators who work for lower fees, which may cause

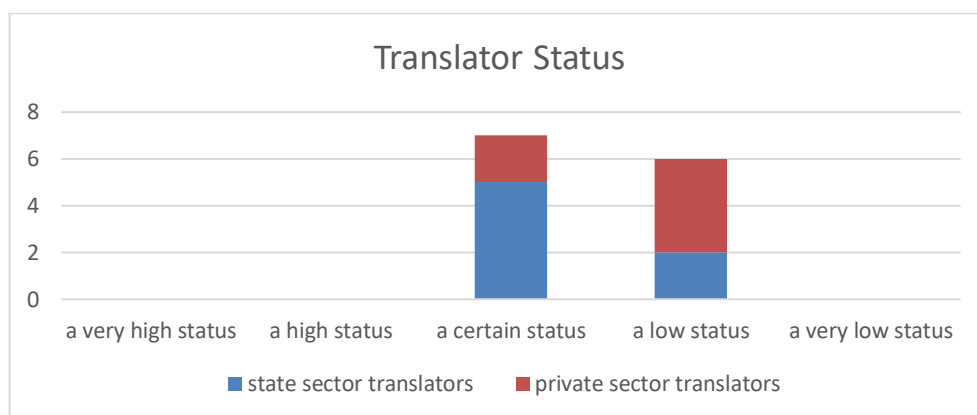


qualified translators to opt for a different career (2017, p. 150). The translation sector in Turkey is described as “a sector where there are no standards, no job security, or no standard remuneration” (Öner, 2012, p. 60-61) and this indicates that all traits of an established profession are still not present in Turkey (Yılmaz, 2018, p. 44).

### **CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AND STATUS**

With an aim to investigate the translators’ perceptions of status, first, the translators were asked to assess their perceived degree of status in society. There were five answering possibilities: a very high status, a high status, a certain status, a low status, a very low status. As Graph 1 shows, all of the translators opted for a certain or low status. This very first finding of the study clearly indicates that state and private sector translators show similarity in terms of their perceptions of status. In fact, this similar response pattern between the state and private sector translators can be observed also in the following sections below.

**Graph 1:** Translator’s Status Perceptions



When forwarded questions regarding their status, the translators in this study stated that they are aware of the low social recognition of their profession in society. In addition, they referred to the low appreciation of the education, expertise and skills required to perform translation, and mentioned that translators are underpaid, depend on unfair sector conditions and have very little influence in their workplace.

### **Economic Capital**

Economic capital is often considered to be a significant status indicator (e.g. Chan 2005). In the research, both state sector and private sector translators show a similar pattern in their assessments of the amount of income translators receive in Turkey. During the interviews, when discussing income as a status parameter, all of

the translators referred to the competition in the market, mentioning the unqualified translators who cause lower fees in the market. They believe that this is due to lack of recognition of the significance of translation and “anyone-can-do-it” approach. Out of thirteen interviewees, eleven stated that their average income was lower than those with a similar educational background. All of the translators in both sectors argue that the nature of translation is misknown by the masses and there is also lack of professional standards and competencies that regulate market entry, which allows individuals with low cultural capital to easily find a place in the market:

T1: “I believe they think that a translator “has it easy”. Society thinks that translators just look at words and write them in another language. They do not know the processes; they do not know how much education and training it requires.”

T5: “As a translator working in a state institution, I can easily say that translation is not recognized as an important task to do. People think that they can easily do it if they know a foreign language.”

One of the experienced translators, T4 supports this as follows: “Such an approach leads to a very competitive sector in which translation fees fluctuate”. All of the translators clearly stated that clients are more interested in saving money as they lack the ability to judge the quality of translation for most of the time. This approach of the clients may even cause some freelance translators to lose the chance to gain economic capital, as discussed by T 13: “The competition in the market causes an unfair situation as clients often choose translators according to the price not the quality”. Such statements indicate that the competition with the unqualified translators in the translation market influences translators’ economic capital negatively. According to the translators in both sectors, this situation constitutes an obstacle to transforming their own individual cultural capital into economic capital.

As a result of the competition among professionals and non-professionals seeking economic capital and the clients’ quest for lower fees rather than quality, it might be assumed that this desire for economic capital from both translators’ and clients’ perspectives may even influence translators’ practices, leading to poor quality translations in the market. T7 clearly states that such non-professionals lead to lower quality translations in the market. T4’s following statement is also in line with this assumption: “The competition in the market causes translations below the acceptable quality level”. T4 further argued that the economic capital could be a also factor that discourages prospective translators from even entering the market as the fees the graduates get are really low. Under such competitive market conditions, gaining limited economic capital may also cause some of these translators to lose their commitment to the profession. During the interviews, when discussing their sources of dissatisfaction, five out of thirteen translators referred to the low amount of economic capital they receive as one of the factors which determine their intentions to leave the profession and opt for other professions.

### **Cultural Capital**

One of Bourdieu's main claims is that "cultural resources... have come to function as a kind of capital, and thereby have become a new and distinct source of differentiation in modern societies" (Swartz, 1997, p. 136). The translators in this study consider themselves as possessors of a significant cultural capital. They argue that they are in a distinctive position with a combination of qualities such as excellent competence in their mother tongue and foreign language, university education, knowledge about different fields and translation skills.

Cultural capital, in its embodied and institutionalized form, might be expected to be a powerful asset for translators' status. In the present study, 12 translators have a university degree in translation and interpreting. However, they state that university education provides only a basic preparation and that employers attach more importance to experience than university education. Therefore, a diploma, as an institutionalized form of cultural capital, is not seen adequate on its own to contribute to translator status. The majority of translators in both public and private sectors state that a translation and interpreting diploma is not required to enter and practice the profession. They also state that there are experienced translators in the sector known for their quality work although they have not received translation training.

In Turkey an academic degree is not seen as the capital providing a high status on its own. Despite having this form of cultural capital, translators sometimes may have difficulty in finding employment. T4: "The translators face employment problems after graduation. There are not many job opportunities in the private sector and the number of decent translation agencies in the private sector is not high. If they choose to work in the state sector, they need to take some exams, which take a certain amount of time." Therefore, it might be concluded that this form of cultural capital may not be always converted into symbolic capital in Turkey. But the translators interviewed think that it could give translators a certain advantage over others performing in the market. All translators with a degree in translation supported this advantage. T12 states: "I do not claim that it is essential, but it is a tool that we need to have in our toolbox. They should hold their degree in order to not to be disqualified from the race." For instance, T8 states also claims that translators who graduate from prestigious universities can easily find employment in the market. It can be argued that some stakeholders in the market consider the educational path of the translator as an distinctive feature which shapes the quality of the cultural capital and thus the professional habitus of the graduates. Although it is not a requirement to have a degree in translation to enter the translation market in Turkey, the formal education in a prestigious educational institution can be recognized "as a way of acquiring professional qualifications and skills, meaning an opportunity to gain a professional identity and habitus appropriate for entering and operating in the field " (Heino 2017, p. 58).

As the social agents' position in the field depends on the amount and type of capital they have, they constantly struggle to accumulate more capital through various means to succeed in the field. According to Bourdieu, those with the highest amount of capital required in the field have a higher status and therefore more power in the field (Bourdieu, 1987, pp.105-107, pp.170-175). The interviewees are of the opinion that the required expertise and knowledge accumulated not only through education but also through experience are valuable assets for a translator. The following statements are two strong examples of such beliefs:

T1: "A degree alone would teach you nothing. Experience is the greatest teacher in this profession."

T2: "Pursuant to their academic degree, translators should build on it by acquiring on-job experience and knowledge."

All in all, the translators in the study consider translatorial expertise and knowledge they gain in the profession as a form of cultural capital which is more influential in increasing the individual status of the translator. Some of the translators could be given as examples of such translators who strive to accumulate more capital in the market in addition to their degree in translation (their institutionalized cultural capital). T13 clearly states that she is improving her expertise and specialized knowledge with each task she completes. Similarly, T12 said that she has significantly developed her skills since she started working in the market and added that she is still standing at the beginning of the path and greater changes are ahead. In addition, T1 states that he has done well in building up his skills.

The translators in this study believe in the significance of the expertise required to perform in the translation profession. One of them, T1 even argues that "a translator's expertise is as important as a doctor's, it might not cost lives, but one single mistake can cause a project to lose millions". Another translator, T4 states that education, as the institutionalized form of cultural capital, can be a life-saving factor for a translator as it is a clear indicator of your specialized knowledge. She adds that it is very easy to understand from a translator's first sentence produced if s/he holds a degree in translation. Such statements reflect the translators' perception regarding how much they value the cultural capital they utilize in their profession. They believe that a translator's expertise and specialized knowledge should guarantee a higher status in the market as it equips them with the required qualifications to produce high quality translations. The translators tend to value the expertise and knowledge accumulated in the profession so as to strengthen their institutionalized cultural capital gained through education. .

### **Social Capital**

Another form of capital that an agent in a specific field may hold is the social capital. Social capital refers to being a part of a network and how individuals perform in this network (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). In this regard, one of the questions asked to

the translators was about their membership to a professional association. Eleven translators reported that they are not a member of any translation association. T4 stated that she has doubts about how well such associations represent their members and added that she will not become a member until they prove their use. Another translator, T6 clearly stated that he did not feel the need to. T7 said that she did not believe in the use of being a member to such an association. This finding brings about questions regarding to what extent these translators value membership to associations. Obviously, membership to such associations in Turkey is not seen as a capital which provides the translators an opportunity to create a network and to elevate their status.

Translators' social capital may also be analyzed in terms of their power relations. To investigate how much power/influence the translators had, they were asked about the perceived degree of their influence/power in the workplace, that is to say if they have a say about the work-related procedures in their workplaces. According to a total of 11 interviewees both from the state and the private sectors, their influence is limited or at a certain level. The majority of the interviewees stated that they do not have a strong influence or a say in their work places regarding how things proceed, like for example, the submission deadlines, the clientele or the fees. They also stated that they do not communicate with the clients at any point of the translation process. The similarity between the replies from the state and private sector translators here could mean that, in neither of these sectors, translators have a very strong say regarding the procedures in their work places.

### **Symbolic Capital**

The data analyzed show that translators are in a weak position in terms of economic capital and social capital. The possibility of these two capitals being transformed into symbolic capital and providing status is very low. Cultural capital remains as the only capital that can provide recognition for professional translators. However, cultural capital cannot be transformed into symbolic capital for all translators, as there is lack of awareness within the society regarding the quality work translators with a high level of cultural capital produce. Translators can acquire symbolic capital individually only if they interact with certain agents who value this capital within the field of translation production. The individual translators studied in this paper actually struggled against this state of the market and tried to strengthen their position by establishing relationships with the aforementioned agents as early as during their university education.

The translators tried to accumulate their own symbolic capital and enhance their status by looking for networking opportunities, getting experienced, and thus being recognized. Twelve interviewees stated that they worked as translators during their university education in different workplaces such as translation agencies or state institutions in order to gain more experience, develop their network, and to be accepted by the market. T12 gives an example from her own experiences:

T12: “I did three internships, one mandatory and two voluntary, in three prestigious state institutions. Besides these, I got a translation task from a translation agency (translation of a book on foreign policy). Appreciating the quality of my work, the owner of the agency offered me to work as a contracted translator at the Ministry on behalf of his company. This is how I stepped into the Ministry twelve days after my graduation”.

Similarly, T6 stated that he worked as a translator to get experienced during his university education and this work experience gave him the chance to prove his skills and get a job offer right after graduation. T1 also mentioned that he did his internship at a translator company during his academic training and then he was offered a part-time job there as a student. He added that he walked into the office straight away after he graduated.

These examples clearly show that the individual efforts these translators paid towards getting experienced and thus being recognized helped them to have a higher chance of being employed after graduation. In other words, they could find a place in for themselves in the market and convert the cultural and social capital they accumulated through working during their university education into symbolic and economic capital, as well. Similarly, as explained above, both in the state and private sectors, after they start their careers, the translators interviewed struggle individually to accumulate more cultural capital and convert it into symbolic capital with an aim to hold more powerful positions in their field and determine the value of their own work.

## **THE TRANSLATORIAL HABITUS**

Bourdieu defines habitus as the set of dispositions and schemes of perception and appreciation that regulate individuals’ practices (1990: 53). He states that the agents’ habitus reflects the structures of the field they act in and its features are determined by the agent’s capital and position in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). In other words, people’s habitus is the product of collective conditions of the field they operate in and the personal experiences gained through the various and unconscious processes of socialization. Simeoni distinguishes between the “social” (“generalized”) habitus and the “professional” (“specialized”) habitus (1998, pp.18-19). Generalized habitus is composed of the dispositions an agent acquires in the early processes of socialization (through the family, social class, education, etc.). Professional habitus, on the other hand, comprises the dispositions an agent acquires by getting engaged in certain professional activities in the relevant field (Simeoni, 1998, p. 19). Thus, it could be argued that the competitive structure of the market, the external low status perception and the accumulated capitals shape the professional translatorial habitus of the translators and they force translators to work towards an individual status enhancement.

As mentioned earlier, translators are generally accepted as invisible, unimportant, uninfluential and even servile. However, when we reduce this from the general to the individual level, it turns out that the translators exhibit a different habitus. The translators represent themselves as people with strong linguistic and cultural skills, excellent research skills, good time management, discipline, patience and a high level of responsibility. As an example, T3 clearly refers to research skills in his following statement: “Most of the texts I am given to translate are legal texts and I need to do a lot of research to find out how certain legal terms are used in the target language”. Another translator, T1 stated that translators have a high level of responsibility and they always work between deadlines. In addition, both state and private sector translators agree that translation requires specialized knowledge and expertise. Accordingly, they see themselves as highly skilled experts.

The translators also describe themselves as “creative”, “lifelong learner”, “dedicated”, “excited, enthusiastic learner”. The sources of the dedication to their profession mainly concentrate on the opportunity that the translation activities provide in opening new venues for self-improvement. As T1 puts it: “Over the course of my employment, I feel ever going forward and improving. Learning about new subjects each and every day is a big satisfaction for me. I work long hours and usually get home exhausted but I count that under the satisfaction bracket since nothing can replace the joy of a hard day’s work”. As his source of satisfaction, similarly, T3 mentions that he is acquiring more expertise and specialized knowledge in translation. Such responses of the interviewees in this study reveal that they define translation as a continuous learning experience.

This representation of their profession as a task which requires a high level of expertise and specialized knowledge and their self-presentation of themselves as highly skilled experts indicates a proud, dedicated, satisfied translatorial habitus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inspired by the current studies regarding translator status both in international and national contexts, this study set out to study how translators’ economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital and their translatorial habitus are related to their perceptions of status as a professional group in Turkey. The analysis of the interview data has revealed that there is no significant difference between the translators working in the public and private sectors in terms of occupational status, capital and habitus.

First, cultural capital appears to be the most significant type of capital that the translators have. The expertise and specialized knowledge that the translators have accumulated through their education and work experience is the most valued capital form. the study focused on what kind of capital the translators possess.

According to the translators' assessments of their income, they can not convert their cultural capital into economic capital. They do not enjoy a high amount of economic capital although they think they deserve more considering the expertise and specialized knowledge required to perform translation. All of the translators agree on the competitive structure of the translation market which causes unfair market conditions and poor quality translations.

As another type of capital, the translators have limited social capital as they do not have full trust in the use of a membership to a translation association. Their limited social capital is also verified in terms of their power/influence in the workplace.

As for their symbolic capital, the translators all acknowledge the low status the profession is attributed to in society. However, individual translators are struggling to increase their various capitals and convert them to symbolic capital to attain a higher status in the field.

From the narratives it could be concluded that the translators are proud of their translatorial skills, expertise and knowledge gained through experience. Although the people outside the profession do not recognize the importance of translation and the translators commonly agree on the problems they experience in the market, they individually state that it is a profession which requires high amounts of cultural capital. They represent themselves as highly skilled experts and their profession as a constant learning experience. The translators' language skills, academic training and the expertise and specialized knowledge accumulated through their work experiences enhance their feeling of individual high status. All in all, they appear to have developed a habitus of proud, satisfied, committed experts.

This present study attempts to provide insight into the perceptions of the translators who work in the state and private sectors in Turkey regarding their status and to investigate their capital and habitus. Despite the limited number of interviews, valuable data was obtained from the semi-structured interviews with open and close-ended questions. Taking all the findings of the research into consideration, the study argues that the social negative narratives regarding the translation profession in modern Turkey clash with the state and private sector translators' personal narratives in terms of their social, symbolic, cultural capital and translatorial habituses. This topic could be a research subject for further scholarly studies and further qualitative research should focus on more fine-tuned questions revolving around the reasons behind the social negative narratives.

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