

## **Translators as Social Agents: translated fantasy books in Taiwan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the Chinese cultural history, translators used to be 'invisible' unless they had a connection with the official or religious institutions or, in contemporary Chinese communities, the educational institutions, which funded or deployed them to carry out certain translation tasks, on their own or as part of a team. Translators as freelancers from a given social group who successfully introduced a new genre to society were rare. In the case of the sudden increase of fantasy publications which has happened in Taiwan since 1998, some translators were involved as initiators and promoters in the production and distribution. They acted as social agents in both ways: as cultural gatekeepers for society and as opinion leaders especially for the social group of fantasy readers in Taiwan.

This study adopts Pierre Bourdieu's model and key concepts of habitus, capital and field to conceptualise translating activities happening in the Taiwanese book market. Using the example of translated fantasy books and based primarily on a corpus of interviews, the practices of translating, publishing and reviewing are respectively investigated to reveal the interplay of these areas and to locate and constitute the field of translation. The appropriation and dialectics between agents and structure are embodied in this study by applying Bourdieu's reflexive approach.

The human factor has long been ignored in translation studies because the emphasis used to be put on the text. Bourdieu's approach in Translation Studies moves further in the development of an agent-oriented research. The main arguments of this study include: 1. in the development of translation studies, the human factor with its idiosyncrasy, continually influences the formulation of theories, schools, paradigms, and researches which correlate with other disciplines, and is hence essential in the process of objectifying Translation Studies. 2. the sudden increase of translated fantasy books in Taiwan from 1998 is the result of the translators' endeavour under a given context.

**KEYWORDS:** capital, descriptive translation studies, field, habitus, Pierre Bourdieu, prescriptive translation studies, reflexivity, social agent, sociology of translation, translation Studies.

Completion of thesis

Place: University of Warwick, UK

Year: 2007

Supervisor: Professor Susan Bassnett