

How precarious are the working conditions of literary translators? A sociology of translation perspective from Türkiye¹

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Abstract

Studies on the working conditions of literary translators to date reveal that literary translators frequently complain about their working conditions. The present article investigates how Turkish literary translators are affected by precarious working conditions, based on interviews with agents from the publishing industry, including literary translators, editors, and publishers. The research involved semi-structured interviews with 28 participants. The results show that literary translators face five types of precarity: a lack of legal control mechanisms, job insecurity, lack of social security, uncertainty about the future, and income insecurity. However, literary translators' desire to translate literary works broadly takes precedence over their intention to leave the profession. Most of the participants offered solutions to these problematic working conditions, such as solidarity, bargaining, royalties, doing side jobs or translating as a hobby. The study suggests a new avenue for future research to analyse literary translation as a form of labour and encourages sustainable solutions for literary translators in Türkiye and around the world.

Keywords

literary translators, sociology of translation, precarious working conditions, job satisfaction, thematic analysis

¹ This paper is based on part of the doctoral thesis of the first author, which is currently being written under the supervision of the second author.

1. Introduction

Viewed through rose-tinted glasses, the task of literary translators is to convey the aesthetic concerns in the source text to the target text or create similar effects in the target text in some way (Delabastita, 2011). We know that literary translators, like their colleagues in other sub-genres of translation, complain about the lack of standardized working conditions (Sela-Sheffy, 2006). What distinguishes literary translators from their colleagues in non-literary subgenres is the emphasis on “individual-centeredness, intellectual stature and creative skills” (Sela-Sheffy & Shlesinger, 2008, p. 85). Yet literary translators also lay claim to professional status, performing their task with equipment, a network, contracts, social and personal rights, payments, publications etc. This places them in a challenging position within the literary field. Many questions come to mind in terms of defining literary translation as a profession in its own right. For instance, do literary translators have the means to purchase the necessary technological equipment? Do they create their own contracts, or do they accept contracts imposed on them? How do they get paid? How do literary translators build a business network? Where do they stand in matters of social insurance and rights?

Literary translators are rooted in a competition that takes place in a production network of multiple agents. We can therefore apply a sociology of translation with a relational approach to understand the working conditions of literary translators.

Contrary to a limited literary perspective focusing solely on the text, the sociological approach considers translation as a practice, positioning translation as a place where production, change, transformation, and circulation work together. It widely uses the tools of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological approach, in which the focus is on the field rather than social and cultural groups (Bogenç Demirel & Kurlmel, 2020; Seçkin, 2021; Sapiro, 2022). A field takes its source from the dynamic and plural tendencies of agents in the past, present, and future, defined as *habitus* – a “structuring structure which organises practices and the perception of practices” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Agents become visible in society and increase or decrease their reputation with *symbolic capital*, which is the sum and reflection of their *social*, *economic*, and *cultural capital*. Capital is the function of social relations in competition with local and global power relations, which depend in turn on the types of capital. Symbolic capital is an indicator of the dignity and prestige of the agent. Social capital is a property of a relationship network “which provides each of its members with [...] a ‘credential’” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Similarly, economic capital involves material assets that are “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). Cultural capital is defined as instruments for the “appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 488). Investigating a field requires understanding the relations between the agents and the nature of their capital. From this point of view, literary translators, as a professional group, are positioned in the field of struggle with their habitus shaped by the social context and the capital they have acquired. It is not possible to consider the translation product separately from the social status and socio-economic conditions of the literary translator. The literary field is an inseparable whole, with its agents such as the translator, author, publisher, editor and copy editor, and reader as the receptor in a certain context; the text and translation are products circulating within a typical network.

Leading translation scholars have previously emphasized the lack of research on the socio-economic dimension of the translation profession and on translators as professionals (Pym, 2006; Chesterman, 2009; Gambier, 2012; Kaindl *et al.*, 2021). Studies on the socio-economic dimension of the translation profession are quite limited (Moorkens, 2017; Bednárová-Gibova & Majherová, 2021). In fact, due to the semi-professional characteristics of literary

translators, there is less interest in research on literary translators than on other subgenre translators (Bednárová-Gibová & Majherová, 2021, p. 2). Some studies emphasize the low professional status of literary translators (Tekgül, 2017, p. 56). Previous research on Finnish and Israeli literary translators has noted the independence of status (based on reputation) and income (Ruokonen & Mäkisalo, 2018, p. 14; Sela-Sheffy, 2010, p. 136). This study draws on the concept of “insecure work” (Famira-Muehlberger, 2014) together with job (dis)satisfaction and working conditions of literary translators in Türkiye as a case study of issues that affect many literary translators.

The aim of our research is to make visible the invisibles of literary translators by focusing on their precarious working conditions and job satisfaction with their own words. Its starting point is the stress of precarity that literary translators often experience due to signing individual contracts. We concentrate on the following research questions:

- How can we evaluate the working conditions of literary translators?
- What are the consequences of precarious working conditions for literary translators, the publishing industry, and other stakeholders?
- What are the possible consequences of job dissatisfaction for literary translators, publishing industry, and other stakeholders?
- How can we develop proposals to improve the working conditions of literary translators?

In the following, we first define precarious work and job (dis)satisfaction. After introducing practices regarding the working conditions of literary translators, we analyse our interview data. Then we conclude with suggestions for future directions and sustainable solutions for literary translators.

2. Precarious work and job (dis)satisfaction

The word “precariat” is a portmanteau of “precarious” and “proletariat”. The concept of the precariat, which has become more common in recent years as a result of globalization (Banki, 2013; Frase, 2013; Standing, 2011, 2014), mostly consists of a white-collar group which tries to exist in the labour market with project-based, limited-term contracts, deeply affecting the individual and society both in the work and non-work environment (Dejours, 1998; Standing, 2011, 2014). The precariat has broader meaning than experiencing insecure and part-time and/or fixed-term jobs (Bourdieu, 1997; Bauman, 2001). Problems such as an insecure lifestyle and uncertain future are part of the definition and life of the precariat (Vosko, 2006; Standing, 2011, 2014). Although studies on insecurity and precarious work have emerged separately and come to the fore with different concepts, each complements the other (Kalleberg, 2009). Bourdieu was the first to associate the concept of “*précarité*” [precarity] with working life to distinguish regular and irregular workers in his presentation “La précarité est aujourd’hui partout” [precarity is everywhere today] (Bourdieu, 1997). Concerns about short-term contracts, limited or non-existent social protection, excessive workload and low wages could be the outcome(s) of precarious work. Society sees employment as a guarantee of stability. But when employment presents insecure and uncertain opportunities, job satisfaction may decrease. Previous studies on the relationship between precarious work and job satisfaction show that job satisfaction decreases as exposure to precarity increases (Hult *et al.*, 2021; Bryceson, 2010). Job satisfaction can be defined simply as the positive feelings associated with a job (Judge *et al.*, 2017). Many different factors such as appreciation, full and regular pay, appropriate working hours, self-actualisation, job security, a good working environment, career opportunities, etc. may affect job satisfaction. Conversely, precarious working conditions come with negative consequences such as temporary contracts, discontinuity of work, nonstandard

workloads, economic insecurity, and a lack of organized social rights such as retirement and health care. Moreover, individual contracts isolate the individual, eliminating the possibility of collective bargaining for rights.

Literary concerns such as understanding a literary work and finding solutions to difficult word play and culture-specific expressions/idioms are challenges arising from the artistic nature of literary translation work. However, literary translators as workers trying to make a living may find themselves struggling with “flexibility, precariousness, stress, job dissatisfaction” (Gambier, 2012, p. 62). The management of multiple tasks related to the production of translated work itself and self-control due to time constraints gives literary translators flexibility in terms of professional conditions and puts pressure on them at the same time. The main difficulties that a literary translator faces in her/his professional life include low wages, late payments, deprivation of socio-economic rights such as social insurance, retirement, and annual leave, affording items such as a computer and internet, and acquiring an ergonomic workspace and tools to prevent occupational diseases due to a sedentary lifestyle. Literary translators may have to deal with all these difficulties alone in the temporary translation jobs that they acquire through individual contracts.

3. Working conditions of literary translators

Working conditions are liable to have an impact on literary translations. Literary works are a cultural good; books are the products of the publishing industry (Gouadec, 2007). Professional literary translators try to produce outstanding work while earning a living from this production. However, the artistic motivations of literary translators often precede their financial motivations (Heinich, 1984; Kalinowski, 2002; Sela-Sheffy, 2016; Tekgül, 2017). The fact that literary translators engage in part-time and freelance work can be considered a primary factor in their status as precarious intellectuals (Kalinowski, 2002; Sela-Sheffy, 2016, p. 55). Given that one of the major motivations of publishers is to maximise their profit, competition may result in undesirable consequences for the market and translators, such as “price dumping, poor quality translations and loss of image for the translators” (Prunč, 2007, p. 48). Therefore, the habitus of literary translators is based on “the competition with translations of other publishing houses” (Gouanvic & Schultz, 2010, p. 125). Looking at the socio-economic dimension, including contractual terms, remuneration (royalties, flat rates, advances, basic fees etc.), average incomes, taxes, social insurances, and pension plans could present interesting data on the current situation.

Pym *et al.* (2013) published a comprehensive European Commission Directorate-General for Translation-funded report on the status of the translation profession in Europe. The report indicates that literary translators in Europe often earn below the minimum wage (Fock *et al.*, 2008). However, literary translators, despite their low financial status, strive to gain a foothold in the profession for “cultural, symbolic and social” status, to achieve a position in a neighbouring field such as the publishing industry, in addition to their current status (Pym *et al.*, 2013, p. 3). The report also includes data on certain social rights. Literary translators can enjoy tax benefits in some countries because they are copyright holders. For instance, in Austria, low-earning literary translators can receive health insurance support and one-time benefits such as retirement, emergency assistance and disability support through a special fund run by the professional association (Literar mechna, n.d.). The report also provides data on literary translator earnings by sharing the “average price per word” analysis in *FIT [Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs] Europe 2010*. According to the FIT report, “in 20 out of our 23 countries, literary translators’ average purchasing power is less than 60% of PPS [Purchasing Power Standard]” (2010, p. 70). Only Ireland and the United Kingdom exceed

the PPS. However, since different income sources, including conferences and seminars, book publishing, etc., are considered when calculating the income of literary translators in these countries, the report does not reflect earnings from literary translation alone (Pym *et al.*, 2013, p. 90). If we consider literary translation as the sole source of income, it is clear that literary translators do not earn well, and where they do, they are able to earn additional income from their literary translation practice.

CEATL (European Council of Literary Translators' Associations) recently published the results of its most up-to-date survey on the legal situation of literary translators in Europe (CEATL, 2022), conducted between May and July 2021 in 27 countries. The results show that the vast majority of countries surveyed do not offer a typical or standard literary translation contract, including Türkiye (p. 8). In Türkiye, ÇEVİBİR (the only professional association for book translators in Türkiye) offers a model contract that is advisory, rather than a legally binding standard contract (Tip Sözleşme, n.d.). One striking result in the survey is that the main discussion topic in all countries is "economic gain" (p. 11). Rights which could make literary translators feel secure in case of conflicts such as "reversion rights" (p. 16) and/or "conciliatory procedures" (p. 20) are not granted in most countries, again including Türkiye. According to the results, literary translators in almost half of the 27 countries never receive exploitation reports, and this is rarely possible in Türkiye (p. 31). Most countries do not have any "legal framework regarding transparency", including Türkiye (p. 32). A lack of transparency makes bargaining on remuneration linked to sales figures difficult and inhibits the solidarity of literary translators.

Literary translators in Türkiye "suffer from a general lack of visibility and a low professional image" and they try to take advantage of business networks when faced with "adverse market forces" due to the lack of standard regulations (Tekgül, 2017, p. 57). Unfortunately, there is no direct legal framework or legislation regarding literary translators in Türkiye. Literary translators are subject to legal regulations regarding their rights and responsibilities as the owner of the "intellectual and artistic product bearing the characteristic of the adaptor, which is created by benefiting from another work, but which is not independent of such work" [i.e., adaptations] in the Intellectual Property Law (Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, 1951/2001, p. 5). According to the law, as the owner of the adaptation, the translator is authorized to deal with moral rights relating to the publication time and form of the translation, whether her/his name will feature on the translation, and the edits that can be made to the translation. Moral rights cannot be transferred, but they can be authorised for use. In practice, this may correspond to translator rights being assigned to the publishing house in poor contracts. The right to adapt, reproduce, distribute, and perform the translation belongs entirely to the translator as per the standard international economic rights based on the Convention (Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, 1951/2001, pp. 13-14; Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, 1979). However, according to the law, there are two authors in the case of a translated work: the author of the original work and the translator (Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, 1951/2001). Each author may exercise financial rights limited to her/his own work. For instance, the publishing house usually obtains the adaptation right on behalf of the translator with written authorisation from the author. The comprehensiveness of the law in terms of content is debatable. By definition, it only covers translation as an adapted work; the translator is not even included in the law as a subject. Since translation is not regulated separately from other types of adapted works, poor contracts may result in violations of translators' rights. This shows that there is a need for a legal framework for translation contracts that defines translation as a profession and includes definitions and guarantees for translation contracts.

When it comes to the source of income for professional literary translators in Türkiye, the

situation is more complicated. In Europe, “the primary source of income for a professional literary translator is the basic fee”, while other payments such as royalties and public lending rights fees differ by country and contract (European Commission, 2022, p. 40). In Türkiye, literary translators usually receive either a basic fee “calculated by page, number of keystrokes or number of words of the finished translated work” (European Commission, 2022, p. 40) or royalties. ÇEVİİR recommends that translators should be paid royalties instead of a basic fee, to prevent loss of rights in future editions of books. If a basic per-page fee is charged, it should be as high as possible, considering that no fee will be charged in future editions (ÇEVİİR FAQ, n.d.). Türkiye does not yet have a public lending right scheme that could be considered a source of income for literary translators (Public Lending Right International, n.d.; European Commission, 2022, p. 40).

ÇEVİİR was established in 2006 and became a member of CEATL in 2009. Since then, the association’s aim has been to improve working conditions for literary translators (ÇEVİİR, n.d.). The association recommends a contract for book translations with a minimum 7 % royalty rate and 2000 copies per edition published (Tip Sözleşme, n.d.). However, there is a need for control mechanisms to enforce the proposals. In addition, the association organizes workshops and seminars for literary translators, contributing to the creation of a social network. It announces newly released and out-of-print translations on its website to attract interest from publishers and thus circulates the symbolic capital of literary translators (Translations seeking a publisher, n.d.). Although social networks may be effective in shaping public opinion, the association still has a long way to go to implement the necessary legal arrangements or establish a legal contract to improve the working conditions of literary translators.

4. Method

Our research involved semi-structured Zoom interviews with literary translators to gain an impression of their subjective experiences, perspectives, and perceptions. The translators were interviewed at their own desks, giving us the opportunity to witness the gestures and attitudes of participants as well as their working environments, material, and equipment. We contacted literary translators via e-mail, phone, and social media. Our research included 28 participants who have at least three published literary book-length translations. The interviews were held in September, October, and November 2021.

Using the snowball data collection method, we asked the initial participants whether they knew any other literary translators that they thought could contribute to the research. The process was completed naturally, with each participant suggesting others (Naderifar *et al.*, 2017). We also contacted ÇEVİİR and requested support in finding participants. After ÇEVİİR sent the announcement to its members, some participants volunteered. When the responses of the participants began to show similarity and repetition, we did not need to conduct further interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). During the interviews, we kept a reflective diary and recorded the details of each interview. In addition, we kept audio recordings of each interview to prevent data loss with the informed consent of participants. We asked each participant for her/his feedback on the interview questions to develop a reflexive research path. We transcribed all the audio recording data – 32 hours, 28 minutes in total – and started the coding process. First, we coded the names of the participants (T1, T2, ...). To analyse the data, we drew on qualitative content analysis, which provides an in-depth understanding of events, facts, and participant perspectives (Mayring, 2004). We transferred the verbatim 325-page-long audio recording transcripts into MAXQDA software and assigned codes to independently recurring themes by repeatedly reading the data in the light of Bourdieu’s sociological approach.

5. Results

5.1. Participants

The actions aimed at understanding the object and the structure and dynamics of the field are of great importance in identifying, positioning and shaping field data. To construct the object and grasp the structure and dynamics of the field in its most up-to-date form, we preferred data obtained from the participants' own words and frames of mind.

Basic participant and interview characteristics are indicated in Table 1 below.

Code	Gender	Age	Interview Duration (min)	Number of Words Per Interview
T1	Male	61	-	2374
T2	Female	44	51	4129
T3	Female	48	80	8474
T4	Female	43	110	8983
T5	Male	50	120	13161
T6	Male	44	45	4226
T7	Female	49	60	6693
T8	Male	49	85	10353
T9	Female	45	70	6965
T10	Female	40	60	5623
T11	Female	35	75	8632
T12	Female	34	100	8865
T13	Female	30	70	4979
T14	Male	69	68	5200
T15	Male	65	-	1443
T16	Male	46	-	1150
T17	Female	50	75	6826
T18	Female	42	55	5919
T19	Female	51	100	10013
T20	Female	66	120	12957
T21	Female	52	75	9394
T22	Female	24	60	7094
T23	Male	63	60	7576
T24	Female	42	100	11873
T25	Female	55	60	5108
T26	Female	49	65	8423
T27	Female	28	60	3915
T28	Female	40	95	9159

Table 1. Basic participant and interview characteristics

As can be seen from the table, the project involved interviews with 28 literary translators. Three participants requested a written interview for reasons such as health and internet access problems. The online interviews with the other 25 participants took a semi-structured format. The average interview time was a little under 77 minutes. This was longer than expected: the participants were generous with their time. The average age was 46 years, 11 months. The participants consider a mature age to be appropriate for literary translation. For instance, one of the participants mentions that age is an advantage for her/him: *"I consider myself lucky to have started this job full-time at the age of 55 after securing my retirement at another job and choosing a more secluded life"* (T20). Similarly, another participant mentions his/her lifestyle as one of the reasons for preferring literary translation: *"If I were in my mid-twenties right now, I would prefer a much more active job, now I prefer a less active life because of my age"* (T25). 20 of the 28 participants (71.42 %) are female, 8 (28.57 %) are male. The gender characteristics of the participants reflect the broader ÇEVİRİ membership, 60% of whom are women (T9).

5.2. Themes

The five kinds of precarity that emerged from our interviews are a lack of legal control mechanisms (disorganisation, violation of contracts, transparency and accountability), job insecurity (inconsistent workflow, individual contracts, unfair competition), lack of social security (lack of health insurance, lack of retirement/pension, lack of solidarity), uncertainty about the future (loss of focus and/or motivation, stress, anxiety, burnout), and income insecurity (side job status, low and/or irregular wages). Figure 1 shows the themes that emerged as a result of the interviews and the relationship between them.

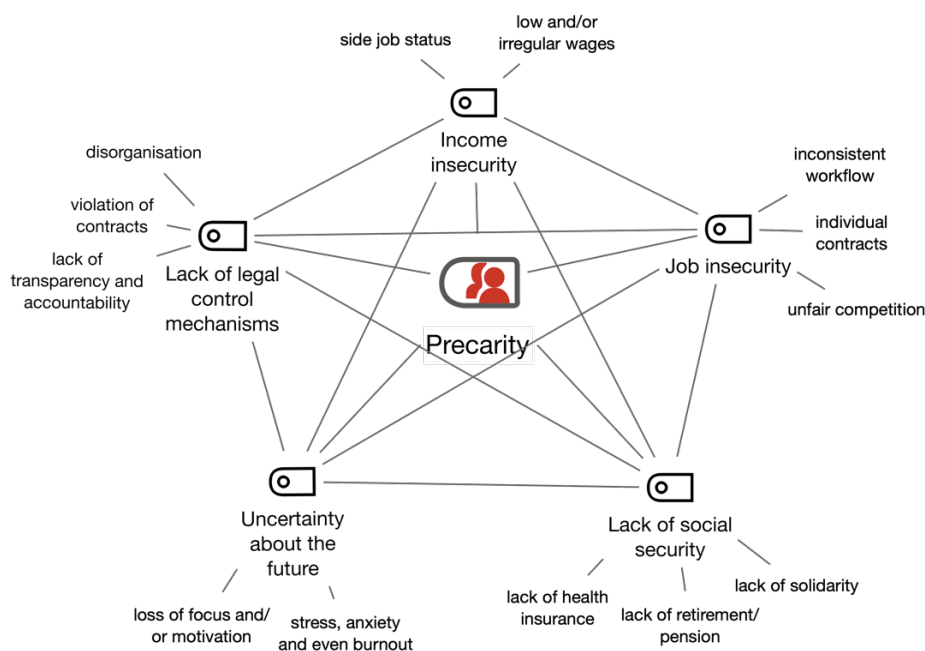


Figure 1. Types of precarity affecting literary translators

5.2.1. Lack of control mechanisms

Participants frequently stated that translation publishing is *"a very broad field"* (T5) whose rules are determined by contracts (T1, T3-T5, T18, T21). Contracts are the rules that build the structure of the field. They could be the product of negotiations (T1), or an agreement submitted by the publisher with a uniform contract procedure (T4): *"It is not a jointly drawn up contract. The publisher says I have only one contract. Here I apply the same contract to everyone. Here*

you go, sign it. You can't even say anything in that contract". The dominator shapes the field by imposing her/his own rules. Power is asymmetrically distributed and concentrated in the hands of publishers. Except for a handful of experienced professionals who have proven themselves in the field or have achieved a certain status thanks to their symbolic capital, literary translators remain powerless due to legal gaps, compared to other actors in the field who hold power, such as publishers with institutional capital. These statements, which reflect the disorganisation of the field, are supported by other participants: *"What exactly is our job description? What can we do and what can't we do? How well are we represented in contracts? What are our rights? All these issues are unclear in our contracts. Everyone is still groping in this field after all these years"* (T21). In Bourdieu's terms, the field is built with flexible and permeable rules, especially for those who dominate, and the agents take up positions accordingly. The domination of the publisher over the translator is legitimised by book translation contracts, paving the way for contract violations and preventing transparency and accountability.

The field is the arena of struggle where the practices of those who participate in it and the social and economic conditions around it act together. Literary translation can hardly be described as an autonomous field: literary translators, at the intersection of the translation publishing and literary fields, form a multidimensional structure in which many dynamics come together. At the intersection where two flexible and mostly unwritten practices shape the rules of the field, the consensus-based agreements that each literary translator signs with the publisher are translation contracts, the literary translator's employment contract. However, it would be wrong to claim that translation contracts are signed for each book translation or that translation book contracts are always based on consensus. According to our field data, 3 out of 28 translators (slightly over 10%) stated that they had previously worked without a contract.

5.2.2. Job insecurity

Book translation contracts do not consist of strict and immutable rules. Each publisher (an institutional capital with dominance over individuals) or a proven literary translator (for instance with distinguished symbolic capital) may have a preferred translation contract or clauses they want in the contract, triggering job insecurity for the rest. One participant stated that when the contracts are not found sufficient in terms of content and scope, practices outside the contract differ: *"Unwritten, unpublished rules are still very dominant and widely applicable in this field. There are contracts, but everything proceeds by consensus in a much more dominant way"* (T3). Although efforts have been made to regulate the field through contractual conditions, it is not regulated by standard written rules, leading to job insecurity arising from individual contracts. One of the factors causing this is explained by a participant: *"We can't tell each other our royalties. We need to fix royalties now and say, 'We only work in this way, don't work in any other way'. We've got to say, 'Go find someone else then'"* (T11). As a way of preventing unfair competition, participants suggest establishing set royalty payments, or at least sharing and discussing the payment terms to open the way to bargaining and solidarity. However, the individuality of translation contracts and fierce competition between literary translators make solidarity difficult and weaken the position of translators vis-à-vis the publisher. Since book translation contracts can change according to the conditions of the translator and the publisher in terms of language, experience, economic condition, approach to translation, etc., it makes it difficult for literary translators to settle on a stable and strong position. The field has a flexible and variable dynamic, where the hand of the publisher is stronger, especially in terms of economic, social, and institutional capital. Another participant associates the dynamic nature of the field with the behaviours of literary translators:

There are translator behaviours that shape this field. My insistence on getting a seven percent royalty doesn't shape this field. If I insist on seven or eight percent, no one will give me a translation. Some accept four percent (T5).

Tough competitive conditions eliminate the bargaining chips held by translators, making it impossible to act boldly while developing their own strategies. The unstable conditions in the field clearly indicate an unbalanced scale in remuneration and inconsistency in workflow. However, this can also provide flexible terms for both literary translators and publishers. Accordingly, the translator may not be subject to penalties for missing deadlines, nor is the publisher subject to penalties for delayed payment (T1, T12). In such a power struggle, agents may have to resort to various tactics and strategies to enter the field. Literary translators may choose to become a member of a professional organization to increase their capital and gain an advantageous position.

5.2.3. Lack of social security

Social insecurity was mentioned to a greater or lesser extent by all participants. One participant stated, "I have no such thing as professional security in any respect. I don't know whether I will have a job tomorrow or not. I have no insurance, no pension. In that sense, literary translation is a complete precariat" (T19). The participant points out that social insecurity is accompanied by job insecurity, income insecurity and future uncertainty, impacting participant's experiences. 57 % of the interviewees are ÇEVİBİR members, 20 % are members of other professional organisations and 23 % are not members of any professional organisation. The rate of ÇEVİBİR membership among the participants in our study is quite high. One of the foremost reasons is likely the support we received from the association in contacting participants. Participants signed up to professional organisations to receive advantages such as solidarity, legal advice, bargaining power, and networking. Forms of social capital such as establishing relationships and access to social networks are important in maintaining or improving social position (T1-T13, T18-T21 and T24). However, many participants stated they have created their own standards over the years due to the lack of solidarity and signed contracts with publishers in line with them (T5-T7, T11, T12, T21, T25, T27 and T28). Although the social capital of individual agents has a great impact on their position in the field, the power of symbolic capital may also strengthen their position.

5.2.4. Uncertainty about the future

The participants frequently talked about their passion for translation: "*I love translating and I particularly enjoy working in the field of literature*" (T10). One participant describes the value of literary translation for herself/himself: "*You learn a lot. In terms of world knowledge, translation is definitely a very valuable field*" (T13). Another participant states that translating a book properly is the greatest source of pleasure: "*All I can think of is giving the translation its due. When I start translating, I always say, 'God, let me finish this with dignity'*" (T3). The participant expresses the view that literary translation requires serious focus and attaches great importance to the artistic quality of the work. When the participants evaluate literary translation from an emotional point of view, they give very positive reactions. The terms they choose complement their positive body language. Perspectives on literary translation may change when participants see themselves as professionals doing a job and earning a living. One participant expresses her/his feelings for literary translation as "*a profession to be done with love*" and continues, "*it should be in a much better place after all this hard work. Literary translators are not yet in the place they deserve*" (T3). The participant interprets the profession from an emotional point of view and finds the position of the profession inadequate. Similarly,

another participant's evaluation of the literary translator habitus reflects a degree of stress and anxiety about the future:

Everyone my age does this for pleasure, for their own enjoyment, for the love of literature. So, if you say would you do it as a profession? No, I wouldn't. But I would do it for pleasure. There is no way to be a literary translator. In other words, you can't say, 'I am a translator, and I can pay the rent with my book translation. I can take care of a child. I can earn a living' (T17).

The reactions when a participant considers literary translation as a hobby and when s/he considers it as a means of living are diametrically opposite. The interviews demonstrated that literary translators are concerned about their future as they are unable to earn a sustainable income.

Interviews often revealed the progressive impact of job insecurity on participants' professional perceptions: "I don't recommend anyone becoming a literary translator anymore" (T1), "I don't have the excitement of five years ago. Recently, I have been saying that I need to find an alternative" (T11), and

If publishers support us financially very little, they may miss us. Because it's a very demanding job. But I'm afraid that if people don't have any moral or material motivation to do it, literary translation will fall into the hands of unprofessional people who don't know how to do it. For example, I can't do it anymore (T4).

Precarious working conditions become a challenge; agents develop multiple solutions to struggle on or leave the field. Job insecurity negatively affects job satisfaction, reduces job quality, wears out employees, and may even result in burnout, forcing translators to leave the field altogether.

5.2.5. Income insecurity

Factors such as job insecurity, low wages for excessive workload, financial difficulties and an uncertain future reduce the job satisfaction of individual agents. They may even result in the intention to leave the profession. Perhaps one of the most prominent strategies developed by literary translators is to do side jobs to make a living. According to our interviews, 93 % of participants work a side job. This is a clear indication of the precarious working conditions of literary translators. Side jobs may become a haven for literary translators to strengthen their capital, both in terms of economic and social security. However, it may risk both the time and effort that translators can devote to literary translation (T4, T5, T8, T14, T15, T19, T20, T27) and the time they allocate for themselves (T10, T22, T23). Taking on a side job is a defence mechanism that participants develop to allay insecurities relating to income insecurity and lack of social security:

No social security, no pension. However, there are people in this profession who are actually dealing with full-time jobs, such as editors, academics, teaching or jobs that would never come to mind. Of course, they can have health insurance or retirement. Apart from that, if you just look at it as a book translator, you have to pay all these out of your own pocket (T9).

Income insecurity may lead literary translators to do side jobs or pursue literary translation as a side job, which could have negative consequences in terms of decreasing job satisfaction and lead to precarization.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Much time has been devoted over the years to discussing whether literary translation is an art or a craft, or whether literary translation is a profession, job, occupation, or something else. But little attention has been paid to what happens to literary translators at the workplace: How do they earn a living? How do they survive financially? Can they cope with the difficulties they face, and if so, how?

The payment for the first edition of a literary work translated in Türkiye is usually below the monthly minimum wage “that is less than one third of the monthly poverty threshold” (Turkish Trade Unions, 2023). Since a literary translator must devote at least a few months to a book, s/he cannot cover the most basic living expenses. The vast majority of literary translators cannot earn a living solely from their profession. They must do side jobs to obtain income security and/or health insurance. Along with literary translation, doing side jobs just to earn a living or doing literary translation as a side job may cause limitations in terms of time that reduce translation efficiency. It also creates a very favourable environment for the spread of precarious working conditions and the reduction of solidarity.

The precarious working conditions of literary translators may result in job dissatisfaction. Not being able to earn a living from literary translation may lead to burnout and leaving the profession. However, literary translators’ professional passion and desire for prestige add to their motivation. It is therefore important to investigate the relationship between job insecurity and satisfaction to improve the working environment of literary translators. Improving the working conditions and increasing job satisfaction of literary translators could also result in better work, therefore increasing the job satisfaction of other agents and leading to a sustainable improvement in the translation publishing industry.

The starting point to minimize the negative aspects of working conditions could be cultural policies. A social security/health insurance model could be developed for literary translators: successful implementation in some European countries can be taken as an example in this regard (cf. CEATL, 2008, pp. 44-48). A support program for literary translation could be brought into effect. Professional organisations could be encouraged for solidarity, raising the possibility of collective bargaining. A minimum payment schedule could be agreed with publishers and professional translator organisations. Such an agreement could decrease job dissatisfaction by facilitating standardisation in the field and prevent conflicts between translators and publishers. Both publishers and literary translation organisations could increase their efforts to ensure that the industry complies with ethical principles to avoid precarious working environments sourced from unethical behaviour (disproportionate fee reductions, failure to inform translators about reprints, plagiarism, etc.). In this regard, control mechanisms in line with the principles of transparency and accountability could prevent unethical practices. In addition, in-service training for literary translators could be encouraged. It may be necessary to strive for a legally binding standard contract: the royalty rate and the minimum number of published books in a single print run could be set to prevent unfair competition. Following successful implementations around the world, a fund could be created to support social rights and insurance for literary translators. Communication and cooperation between professional organisations, industry and academia should be increased. Collaborations covering the whole field are vital in implementing sustainable mechanisms.

Factors such as the language being translated, the type of text to be translated, the translator’s habitus, the author, the publisher of the translation, its reception in both source and the target culture market affect the bargaining position and earnings of literary translators. But what is certain is that those literary translators who make a living solely through literary translation suffer from precarity. Precarious working and living conditions negatively affect

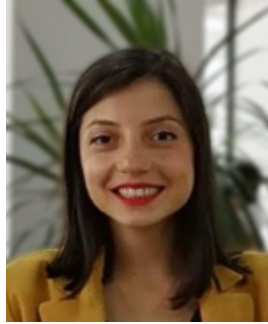
literary translators' job satisfaction and pave the way for them to pursue this profession as a hobby and/or a sideline. Our research could promote constructive solutions for the future of the literary translation profession. Growing interest in socio-economic approaches to literary translators encourages new research, which is a promising start. We hope that it will be possible to produce sustainable solutions for literary translators in Türkiye and around the world.


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