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INTRODUCTION

Theoretical, methodological and terminological issues regarding indirect translation: An overview

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The practice of indirect translation (ITr), here understood as a translation of a translation (see Gambier 1994, 413; 2003, 57), has a long-standing history (e.g. the Bible, I Ching, Shakespeare translation or the activity of the so-called Toledo School), widespread use in various areas of today’s society (e.g. audiovisual, computer-assisted and literary translation, localization) and, arguably, a promising future (e.g. due to globalization and the increasingly high number of working languages in international organizations, which entails editing documents via the linguae francae). Despite all this, ITr has traditionally attracted only marginal attention from translation scholars and only in recent years has it become a more popular concept in translation studies (TS) research. This growing popularity is evident from the noticeable surge in the number of scientific publications (see Pięta 2017, in this special issue) and academic events (e.g. those held in Barcelona, Germersheim and Lisbon in 2013), as well as the founding in 2016 of an international network of researchers working on ITr (IndirecTrans, www.indirectans.com). Such developments have made a significant contribution by, for example, challenging the conventional binarism in the study of translation or offering insights into the historiography of intercultural relationships and the complex role of intermediary centres in the cross-cultural transfer between peripheries. However, ITr research remains very fragmented and this concept is thus still largely undertheorized, and its position within TS still marginal. Research has not kept pace with the rapidly evolving practice.

In an effort to overcome this fragmentation, launch this area of research from a scientific basis and accelerate the production of (a common core of) knowledge, this special issue will shed light on the state of the art of research on ITr, expand/challenge current understanding of this practice and reflect on future research avenues. Our focus is on conceptual, terminological and methodological issues.

Claims, assumptions and motivations

Before addressing the main terminological, theoretical and methodological issues, it may be useful to identify claims, assumptions and motivations regarding indirect translation. It is said to be a common practice. Given an apparently still predominant demand for closeness to the source text (ST), ITr tends to be negatively evaluated because it arguably increases the distance to the ultimate ST and, therefore, is often hidden or camouflaged.
If translation is deemed bad, because derivative, ITr is worse. It is said to be more frequent in the reception of (geographically, culturally and linguistically) distant literary systems (but see e.g. Maia 2010, for counter examples), decreasing as relations become closer. It is also claimed that ITr is followed by direct translation, whenever retranslation occurs (but ample proof against this also abounds). Historically, ITr appears to decrease when adequacy or source-orientedness prevails, but increase when acceptability or target-orientedness prevails (Boulogne 2009; Ringmar 2007; Toury 2012). Due to globalization, ITr apparently increases, given that within an international network of power relations, intercultural text transfer is often mediated by dominant systems. As a consequence, ITr tends to be done from one peripheral language into another via a central or hypercentral language within the world system or the regional system of translation (Heilbron 2010).

As for motivations, it apparently occurs due to a lack of translators or of linguistic competence in the ultimate SL, or due to difficulty obtaining the original text or translating from a geographically and/or structurally distant language. The higher price of translating from a distant language, as well as power relations between languages, cultures and agents within the world translation system are also mentioned as possible causes for ITr (for additional reasons, see e.g. Washbourne 2013).

**Terminological issues**

If we choose to tread an onomasiological path, ITr, defined as translation of a translation (see Gambier 1994, 413), has developed a metalanguage often described as “messy” (Pym 2011, 80). Many publications in the field regret this terminological instability (often perceived as a symptom of undertheorization), but the overwhelming majority do not justify their terminological choices. Metalinguistic surveys are even less common (but see Ringmar 2007, 2–3; Pięta 2012, 13; Schultze 2014), as are explicit attempts to promote a certain degree of terminological standardization (but see Pym 2011, 80).

Taking a different viewpoint, and informed by a conviction that terminological and semantic diversity does not necessarily mean metalinguistic confusion, this section aims to help put some order into the metalanguage of ITr research and increase awareness of terminological and semantic differences. Accordingly, it will systematize some of the most salient terminological and semantic discrepancies, pinpoint noticeable terminological and semantic patterns, consider some causes and effects of metalinguistic instability, and make recommendations as to those needing urgent solution related to the concept of ITr. The underlying rationale is that ITr research – and TS in general – should strive for a discourse that (a) is unambiguous and harmonized (but not completely uniform); (b) optimizes (rather than unnecessarily multiplies) the already rich repertoire of terms and their meanings; and (c) cultivates “an awareness of differences in usage and where terms are clearly defined within the language and the school of thought for which they apply” (Snell-Hornby 2007, 322).

This section focuses on the metalanguage used by scholars rather than practitioners (for the simple reason that there is not enough data available on the latter, but see e.g. Brodie [2013]) and in English (mainly because in most other languages ITr terminology appears to be largely underdeveloped).1
**Terminological discrepancies**

When acknowledging the metalinguistic diversity, studies tend to refer to discrepancies between terms denoting the ITr process and/or its end text. Since an exhaustive listing would be impossible here, Table 1 presents only a selection of terms.

However, the discrepancies are also evident in terms used for the language of the ultimate TT, as well as for other intervening texts and their corresponding languages. Illustrative snapshots of this divergent terminology are offered in Tables 2–4.

As shown in Tables 1–4, while different terms are often used with the same or analogous meaning, the same terms are also often used with different meanings. Such terminological and conceptual instability, evidenced by cases of synonymy and polysemy, can be seen in TS in general (Van Vaerenbergh 2007), so it seems unrealistic to expect ITr research to be an exception. However, in line with the rationale laid down we propose that, when analysing the chain of texts and languages in the process considered here, it may be more beneficial to use the following designations: the ultimate ST/SL > mediating text/language > ultimate TT/TL. It should be stressed that these terms do not imply that further action or research may not change their status.

Additionally, when referring to the process and/or its ultimate TT, the use of “indirect translation” may also be more beneficial because:

– unlike, for example, “pivot” or “relay” translation, which describe the action of the translator producing the mediating text, it describes the much more significant (Pym 2011, 80) action of the translator working from the mediating text;
– unlike, for example, “relay” or “retranslation”, it has a straightforward antonym (i.e. direct translation);
– it seems a convenient umbrella term to encompass various hyponyms (e.g. “compilative”, “second-hand translation”; see “Towards a Classification” below).

### Table 1. Selected terms for the process and/or the end text (in alphabetic order; bolding designates terms appearing in more than one table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Example of a source</th>
<th>Designation of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>compilative translation</td>
<td>Popović (1976)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double translation</td>
<td>Edström (1991, 11)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eclectic translation</td>
<td>Ringmar (2007, 3)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>end target text</td>
<td>Ringmar (2012, 141)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final translation</td>
<td>Xu (1998, 11)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>indirect translation</strong></td>
<td>Špirk (2014, 137)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediate translation</td>
<td>Toury (1988, 139)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediated translation</td>
<td>Linder (2014, 58)</td>
<td>process and end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pivot translation</strong></td>
<td>Vermeulen (2012)</td>
<td>process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receptor text</td>
<td>Edström (1991, 4)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relay (translation)</strong></td>
<td>Dollerup (2000, 19)</td>
<td>process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relayed translation</td>
<td>Dollerup (2014, 20)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retranslation (re-translation)</td>
<td>Bauer (1999, 20)</td>
<td>process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second-hand translation</td>
<td>Popović (1976, 19)</td>
<td>process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary, tertiary etc. translation</td>
<td>Ringmar (2015, 169)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Washbourne (2013, 607)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>target text</strong></td>
<td>Špirk (2014, 137)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultimate target text</td>
<td>Pięta (2012, 313)</td>
<td>end text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding terminological preferences, it must be acknowledged that some choices may have been somewhat influenced by the researchers’ national/linguistic and school/branch affiliations. For example, the choice of “indirect translation” may have been modelled on *tradução indirecta*, the corresponding term in Portuguese, which has been the main source or target language in our research. Additionally, since our research has been strongly anchored in descriptive approaches to translation, it must be acknowledged that the labelling “indirect translation” and “ultimate SL” is related to the impact of the use of such terms by Gideon Toury (1995), a founding father of DTS.

**Table 2.** Selected terms for the end text’s language (in alphabetic order; bolding designates terms appearing in more than one table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>language C</td>
<td>Landers (2001, 130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>target language</strong></td>
<td>Toury (1988, 139)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>third language</strong></td>
<td>St André (2009, 230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultimate language</td>
<td>Pięta (2012, 313)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.** Selected terms for the intervening text (in alphabetic order; bolding designates terms appearing in more than one table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first-hand translation</td>
<td>Toury (1995, 129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>indirect translation</strong></td>
<td>Washbourne (2013, 608)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediate translation</td>
<td>Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997, 76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediary translation</td>
<td>Dollerup (2000, 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediating text</td>
<td>Pięta (2012, 313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original text</td>
<td>Dollerup (2000, 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original source text</td>
<td>Edström (1991, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pivot (translation)</strong></td>
<td>Grigaravičiūte and Gottlieb (1999, 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary source</td>
<td>Kittel (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relay translation</td>
<td>Washbourne (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source text</td>
<td>Landers (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>target text</strong></td>
<td>Toury (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultimate original</td>
<td>Toury (1995, 129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultimate source text</td>
<td>Pięta (2012, 313)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.** Selected terms for the intervening languages (in alphabetic order; bolding designates terms appearing in more than one table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clearing house</td>
<td>St André (2010, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gateway language</td>
<td>Chengzhou (2001, 197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediary language</td>
<td>Dollerup (2014, 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language A, B</td>
<td>Landers (2001, 130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediating language</td>
<td>Pięta (2012, 313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediator language</td>
<td>Edström (1991, 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle language</td>
<td>Hyung-jin (2008, 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original source language</td>
<td>Landers (2001, 130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pivot language</td>
<td>Grigaravičiūte and Gottlieb (1999, 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relay language</td>
<td>Hyung-jin (2008, 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second, <strong>third language</strong></td>
<td>Hyung-jin (2008, 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source language</td>
<td>Chengzhou (2001, 197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>target language</strong></td>
<td>Dollerup (2000, 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transmitter language</td>
<td>Edström (1991, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultimate source language</td>
<td>Toury (2012, 82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Terminological patterns**

A survey of appellations and definitions featured in publications focused on ITr (listed in Appendix 1 in Pięta 2017, in this issue) made it possible to discern the following patterns with regard to English-language publications:

– “indirect translation” has gained ground against other competing designations for both the process and the ultimate TT;\(^2\) interestingly, this trend runs counter to the preferences indicated in most dictionaries, handbooks and encyclopaedias of translation and TS written in English\(^3\)

– when referring to the process and the ultimate TT, native speakers of Iberian languages (Penas Ibáñez 2015; Zubillaga Gomez 2015) tend to opt for indirect translation (a calque from e.g. the Catalan *traducció indirecta*). The same can be said for English native speakers (Landers 2001; Brodie 2012)

– when referring to the process, publications featuring Chinese and Japanese languages as the ultimate SL or TL often opt for “relay (translation)” (Xu 1998; Chengzhou 2001; St André 2010)

– “mediated translation” (after e.g. the Portuguese *tradução mediada*) is predominantly used (with reference to the process and the ultimate TT) in publications featuring Iberian languages as the ultimate SL or TL (Coll-Vinent 1998; Linder 2014)

– when referring to the process, publications dealing with both oral and written translation usually favour “relay translation” (modelled on “relay interpreting”) (Dollerup 2000; St André 2009)

– publications on audiovisual (Grigaravičiūtė and Gottlieb 1999; Vermeulen 2012) and machine translation (Paul and Sumita 2011) frequently favour “pivot translation”

– the use of “retranslation (re-translation)” in the sense of (the subordinate or a hyponym of) ITr appears most frequent in publications dealing with Chinese as the ultimate SL or TL (Bauer 1999; Idema 2003; Heijns 2003; St André 2003; Jianzhong 2003), but is now extremely rare

– initially the term “second-hand translation” tended to be considered as a synonym of ITr (Popovič 1976, 19; Kittel and Frank 1991, 3); “second-hand translation’ is now more often used as a hyponym of ITr, co-hyponyms being third-, fourth-hand translation, etc. (Špirk 2014, 132–133)

Of course, since the surveyed list of publications is not exhaustive, further research is needed to test these patterns and perhaps identify more.

**Reasons and consequences**

From the above discussion the following explanations for terminological instability in ITr research can be discerned:

– what is under scrutiny is not a simple phenomenon given once and for all but rather one that is complex and constantly evolving (thus bound to generate different terms and meanings);
national/linguistic traditions and school/branch affiliations appear to induce specific terminological preferences; definitions are seldom straightforward; and terminology is sometimes employed uncritically and inconsistently.

This metalinguistic instability hinders efficient communication between experts from the same and neighbouring fields, between teachers and students and also between scholars and practitioners. As such, it may also have contributed to the still rather weak visibility of ITr research in the TS community, translator training and the translation industry.4

Future research avenues with regard to terminology

This survey shows that there are important metalinguistic questions that still require systematic studies. For example,

(a) how has indirect translation been labelled and defined:
   – in different domains of the translation industry (audiovisual, literary, scientific, technical translation, etc.) and in neighbouring research fields (book history, textual and genetic criticism, etc.); have there been any changes over time; how can ITr research benefit from these terms and definitions?
   – by scholars and practitioners using languages other than English; have there been any changes over time?
(b) are terminological patterns identified in publications focusing on ITr also verifiable in TS with different foci?

It is hoped that research following this special issue may bring further answers.

Conceptual issues

If we take a gnosiological path, “indirect translation” is sometimes used in TS with meanings far removed from that considered here: a translation of a translation. For instance, Gutt (1989) uses this label to denote a translation that does not aim at interpretative resemblance to the ST (Pym 2011, 80). ITr is also used to designate a group of strategies described in Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) and applied when the structural/conceptual elements of the SL cannot be translated without altering meaning or upsetting the grammatical/stylistic elements of the TL (e.g. Newmark 1991, 9). Presently, however, a far more recurrent designation to describe this notion is “oblique translation” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995, 31). Finally, the appellation is sometimes used to describe work into the translator’s non-native languages. This happens mostly in English publications by Spanish-native speakers (e.g. Mira Rueda 2015) although it is much more commonly designated as “inverse” or “L2” translation (e.g. Pym 2011, 84).

However, even when ITr (or other terms listed in Table 1) is used with the meaning analogous to that proposed here one cannot help but notice significant discrepancies.
Defining ITr

Probably the most quoted definition is that of Kittel and Frank (1991, 3): ITr is “based on a source (or sources) which is itself a translation into a language other than the language of the original, or the target language”. Gambier (1994, 2003) defines it, in a nutshell, as a translation of a translation whereas for Toury (2012, 82) it involves “translating from languages other than the ultimate SLs”. Pym’s more recent formulation (2011, 80) states that ITr amounts to

the historical process of translation from an intermediary version. For example, Poe was translated into French by Baudelaire, then from French into Spanish by a number of poets. The Spanish versions would then be called “indirect translations”, and the first translation, into French, could then logically be called a “direct translation”.

The definitions by Kittel and Frank and by Pym stress that ITr, even if taken at its simplest in terms of number of languages, tends to involve (a) one ST, in one SL (respectively the ultimate ST and the ultimate SL; see next section) and one source culture; then (b) a first translated text in a second language (a mediating text and a mediating language; see “Terminological Discrepancies” below) and within a second national culture; and then (c) a second translated text in a third language (the ultimate TT and the ultimate TL; see “Terminological Discrepancies”), located within a third national culture. To a certain extent, the constellation of both concepts and terms used in the study of ITr suggest that actual communicative situations may be rather more complex. Reality tends to involve one or more texts in the ultimate SL, one or more texts in a mediating language, one or more texts in several mediating languages, and sometimes mediating texts in the ultimate TL, too. However, some of the above-cited definitions explicitly exclude this possibility. Additionally, both Gambier (1994, 2003) and Toury (2012) do not make this definition depend upon the use of three different languages, thereby making it possible to consider, for example, only two languages in defining this phenomenon, but several mediating agents, texts and processes.

More transparent designations for the various subtypes of ITr phenomena could be: (a) direct vs. indirect translation (using the ultimate ST[s] vs. using mediating ST[s]); (b) complicative ITr (using more than one mediating text); (c) mixed ITr (using both the ultimate ST and mediating text[s]); and (d) hidden or open ITr (whether camouflaged as such or openly and explicitly presented as an ITr).

In order to describe, understand and explain the phenomenon of ITr it appears useful to distinguish several types of indirectness, depending on

(a) the number and type of mediating texts involved in the process (one or more);
(b) the number of intervening languages (one or more) and their choice – involving the use of only one mediating language vs. the use of more than one mediating language and/or the ultimate SL, one or more mediating language(s), and the ultimate TL;
(c) the degree of indirectness (second-hand, third-hand … );
(d) the presentation of indirectness (either hidden or open); and
(e) the status of indirectness (which for research purposes can be either proven or only presumed).

Regarding the type of intervening texts, research might benefit from distinguishing these according to: (a) their language (ultimate ST vs. mediating text vs. ultimate TT); (b)
their importance or role in the translation process (primary vs. secondary); and (c) the frequency of their use during the translation process (permanent vs. occasional use); and also their intended receiver (public texts, i.e. for wider readership vs. private texts, designed for use by the translator only).

As for the intervening languages, research may move forward with a clear identification of both the role played by languages within the translation process, and their status within a world or regional system of translation as suggested by Casanova (2004) or by Heilbron (1999, 2010). Accordingly, one might first distinguish between the ultimate SL, mediating languages and the ultimate TL; and, secondly, analyse these in terms of such categories as dominated/(semi-)peripheral languages(s) vs. dominant/(hyper)central language(s). Most importantly, such an identification might allow for the development of not only descriptive studies of ITr, but also descriptive-explanatory or, in the long run, even predictive studies.

Definitions differ in terms of the number of languages involved. Hence, they may be grouped as follows: (a) those whereby the number of languages is not imposed (e.g. Gambier 1994, 413); (b) those whereby ITr involves (at least) three languages, thus making it impossible to consider, for example, back-translation (L1>L2>L1), interlingual translation of intralingual modernization (L1>L1>L2) or retranslation (L1>L2>L2) as ITr (Edström 1991; Bauer 1999; Landers 2001; St André 2009); and (c) those whereby ITr involves at least two languages, thus making it possible to consider the abovementioned practices as ITr (Toury 1988, 139; 2012, 82).

Definitions also differ in terms of the relationship between the mediating language, ultimate SL and ultimate TL. Some definitions impose no restrictions as to this relationship (Gambier 1994, 413); others stress that the mediating language differs from both the ultimate SL and the ultimate TL, thus making it impossible to consider retranslation or interlingual translation of intralingual modernization as ITr, but possible to consider back-translation as ITr (Kittel and Frank 1991, 3); still others point out that the mediating language differs from the ultimate SL, thus making it impossible to consider interlingual translation of intralingual modernization as ITr, but possible to consider back-translation and retranslation as ITr (Toury 2012, 82); whereas other definitions stress that the mediating language differs from the ultimate TL, thus making it impossible to consider retranslation as ITr, but possible to consider back-translation and interlingual translation of intralingual modernization as ITr (Toury 1988, 139).

Another important variable is the profile of the mediating text’s intended receiver. According to this criterion, the existing definitions can be grouped into those whereby (a) no restrictions are imposed (Gambier 1994, 413); (b) the mediating text is intended only for the translator working from the mediating text (Dollerup 2000, 19); or (c) the mediating text is intended for a wider audience; for example, published (ibid.).

By now it should be clear that the definition suggested here represents a particularly flexible inclusive approach, as it does not impose restrictions regarding any of the above-mentioned variables. As such, when compared to definitions that are restrictive in their coverage, this approach seems more likely to reflect and keep up with the complex and fast-evolving practice of ITr. It thus seems a more convenient entry point for the launching of this still undertheorized field of research from a scientific basis. An additional advantage is that the definition of ITr as a translation of a translation is clear and concise (thus avoiding ambiguous interpretations) and builds on an
existing proposal (thereby helping to optimize current definitions and control their excessive proliferation). However, it is also recognized that such a radically open approach may lead to the questioning of ITr as an autonomous concept given that such a degree of flexibility may raise the problem as to where exactly ITr ends and, for example, retranslation begins.

Towards a classification

In this introduction, we accordingly suggest a classification system, based on three variables:

(a) the number of intervening texts;
(b) the number of intervening languages; and
(c) the choice of intervening languages.

The combination of these criteria allows for the identification of 10 categories, which may be identified by jointly using these labels: direct, indirect, compilative or mixed translation, as shown in Table 5.

Additionally, when subcategorizing indirectness, the following variables appear potentially relevant:

(a) the subcategory of indirectness (exposed and hidden ITrs [and checking (exposed) direct translations]);
(b) the degree of indirectness of the translation process (second-hand, third-hand translation, etc.);
(c) the degree of indirectness of the proofreading process and editing process;
(d) the mediating language(s) (the number of languages/cultures involved and their statuses);
(e) the text-type (literary [fiction, poetry, drama] or non-literary [LSP … ]; the genre [novel, sonnet]; the mode [written, oral]; the medium [internet, smartphone, TV, printed media, manuscript, volume, periodical], etc.);
(f) the participants (author, translator, publisher, editor, proofreader, intended reader and their profiles [commissioning procedure, initiative by publisher vs. translator; status in source culture vs. mediating cultures]);
(g) the setting (time and place of publication);
(h) the intercultural relations (the existence of non-existence of diplomatic relations between countries, ideological and political affinities between regimes [and censorship], translator training programmes, language teaching programmes, international book fairs, international prizes, etc.); and
(i) the degree of tolerance towards indirectness (a greater tolerance [correlate to a higher number of exposed/open ITr] or a lower tolerance [correlate to a higher number of direct translations, exposed/open direct translations, and/or hidden ITrs]).

Open conceptual issues

Open conceptual issues still remain for research to address. The following can be identified as among the most relevant: is the number of languages to be the main criterion for ITr?
What issues are raised by intersemiotic translation? How are we to deal with intralingual translation (a translation for children into Portuguese based on a pre-existing Portuguese version for a different reader): are we to classify it as ITr or as retranslation? Is it possible to develop effective diagrams for representing indirectness, when several sources are possible and/or probable? How can we deal with the difficulty in accessing information (since co-vertness is frequent due to negative evaluation)? How are we to deal with presumed ITr, when no proof can be produced, no mediating text identified? What are the main trends for indirect literary translation? How do variables correlate? Are such tendencies different for non-literary translation? For different text types?

### Methodological issues

For the sake of addressing methodological issues, three preliminary observations should be made. First, in what follows a distinction is made between studies specifically focused on the phenomenon of ITr and historical TS dealing with corpora that comprise TTs which, according to relevant data on the prehistory of their transfer operations, may be classified as ITrs. In other words, there is a plethora of reception studies that deals with ITrs but only a few works on ITr. These tend to adopt narrow definitions and consider ITr to involve one or more mediating language texts (i.e. comprising solely the cases of ITr and Compilative ITr; see Table 5). Secondly, it should be stressed that ITr does not seem to require a methodology of its own vis-à-vis translation history. It does, however, call for the discussion of some important questions that are not posed, or at least not on the same terms, when dealing with direct transfers. Thirdly, it should be clarified that this section is primarily concerned with the historical study of ITr of literary texts. This is because the major part of research on ITr has had a historical slant, as the articles in this special issue show.

Some recent works on ITr deplore the scarcity of research on indirectness, justifying this apparent lack of interest mainly with the low prestige of the practice of indirect translating (Ringmar 2007; St André 2010; Pięta 2014). In general, this appears to be a valid
argument: ITr is considered, indeed, an undesirable practice according to translators’ professional ethics in given fields of communication. Nonetheless, there seems to be a more decisive reason behind the fact that research on ITr has not yet reached a desirable degree of sophistication. It should be borne in mind that the same paradox – a successful scientific discipline on a phenomenon with a low symbolical capital – was the basis of the constitution of TS as a whole, as Ferreira Duarte eloquently put it (cited by Maia, Pinto, and Pinto 2015, 320).

However, these reasons apparently have more to do with methodological issues regarding the study of ITr. It is a very time-consuming and costly area of research, since it is text-oriented, calls for specific areas of expertise and, to make matters worse, is still far from providing a meaningful bulk of data that could allow transnational patterns, historical multinational trends or even tendencies in supranational behaviour to be discerned. Accordingly, studies on indirectness still need to make a case for themselves.

Identifying ITrs is a very complex process. The research typically begins by hypothesizing on the indirectness of a TT whenever features perceived as indicators of an additional stage of mediation are observed (be it by a third language, according to some definitions; an additional transfer process; or the intervention of additional mediating agents). These features can be displayed on both the paratextual and textual level.

The importance of paratexts in identifying translations has been argued for, for example, in Lambert and van Gorp (1985). Pym (1998, 62) presents a working definition based on the description of paratexts: “[if] a paratext allows different discursive slots for an author and a translator, then the text may be said to be a translation (working definition)”. Regarding ITr, suspicions arise if, for example, the researcher identifies discursive slots for not only the ST author and the TT author – that is, the translator – but also a third agent, the author of a mediating text (mostly by means of an explicit reference to a third language). This third entity can be overtly identified or declared in the paratext; this would be the case, for example, of a Portuguese translation of a Polish text bearing the information “translated from English”. However, the researcher will frequently be dealing with hidden ITrs, which might also be labelled pseudo-direct translations (ITrs purporting to be direct translations). In this case, the traces of a third agent will be either presented as, for example, prefaces or introductions by a third-language expert on the ultimate ST author or denounced by covert features such as the transliteration of the author’s name.

Some textual features may also lead us to hypothesize on the impact of a third language or a third literary repertoire on a particular TT. The consequences of the mediation of a third language’s code (Even-Zohar 1990, 50) or poetics (Lefevere 1985, 217) in fictional narrative are frequently traceable through the analysis of macro-textual shifts. For example, eighteenth-century French translations adapted foreign novels to the generic model in line with French taste. In these translations, known as les belles infidèles, some chapters were cut and others added so that the TT would comprise all expected topoi, as adventurous episodes with customs and daggers and a happy married ending (van Gorp 1985; Boulogne 2009; Maia 2010). Due to French’s hegemonic status in the World Republic of Letters until the mid-twentieth century, these translations were frequently used as mediating texts in the making of different European TTs. The impact of a third language can usually be inferred from micro-textual features symptomatic of
negative interference, such as translation errors, syntactic structures, loan words,\(^5\) proper names (in case of fictional writing), etc.

Following such laborious work, a researcher should have a more solid hypothesis of whether or not the TT in question is an ITr. However, the nature and degree of indirectness of a particular TT can be determined only by the identification of the mediating texts and, thus, mediating languages. Hence, both to confirm the indirectness of the TT and determine its degree of indirectness requires even more effort. For this purpose, some of the research tasks include: (a) exploring the translator’s biography, such as which foreign languages they use, which books are in their personal library, where they live, whether they know the ST author or other translators of the ultimate ST; (b) collecting data on the book market, such as which translations were best known; which publishers were exporting to the city where the translation was produced; which booksellers were providing foreign-language texts and from which languages; (c) identifying different linguae francae in a particular time and place, bearing in mind that within one country there may be different bridge-languages (e.g. regions near national borders, or literary and cultural associations dedicated to specific foreign contexts).

At this point, the researcher should have short-listed an array of possible STs and mediating languages. The next stage should be comparison of the TT with the possible mediating texts, which ideally should yield descriptive results similar to those pointed out by Boulogne:

[a] macro-structural and micro-textual comparison of *De gebroeders Karamazov* (1913) with the early French translations of the same source-texts, has shown that this Dutch translation is a remarkable amalgam of two different French translations. About eighty-five percent of the pages are translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (Dostoievsky, 1906), a translation by Wlademir Bienstok and Chales Touquet. The remaining fifteen percent are translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (Dostoievsky, 1888), a polemical translation by Ely Halpévi Kamisly (1858–1936). (Boulogne 2009, 266)

This apparently simple descriptive research task regarding the ultimate TT involved considerable expertise and means. Firstly, such a project depends on the researcher’s knowledge of the language(s) of the ultimate ST, potential mediating texts, and ultimate TT, namely, Russian, French German and Dutch; and considerable time and financial means to explore potential mediating texts, namely the pre-existing French and German translations.

As previously argued, study on indirectness especially, yet not exclusively, in the case of literary translation, shares the methodology of translation history. When listing the research questions to be addressed by historical TS, some authors distinguish between translation’s external and internal history. External history is “who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect?” (Pym 1998, 5). Internal history deals with the analysis of the TTs’ aesthetic and ideological makeup. To sum up, it is possible to distinguish translation’s external and internal history in these terms: the former is the kind of history to be construed from context” and the latter “the kind of history to be construed from text” (Koster 2002, 24).

In fact, a considerable amount of relevant data on the phenomenon of indirectness has been uncovered by target-oriented projects in the history of literary exchanges between peripheral languages with “what” questions not explicitly concerned with indirectness. To give but three examples: Boulogne (2009) started by asking “which Dostoyevsky’s
novels were translated into Dutch?"; Pięta (2016) asked “which Polish literary texts were translated into European Portuguese?”; and Špirk (2014) asked “which Czech literary texts were translated in 20th-century Portugal?” As explicitly stated by Pięta (2014, 17), researchers tend to interpret the “how” question as inquiring into the direct or indirect nature of the transfer of the literary products under study.

While theoretically correct to affirm that the choice of ST pertains to the external, contextual, history of translation, it should be made explicit that, as far as methodology is concerned, identifying mediating texts and mediating languages comprises considerable work with texts. It is thus fair to claim that the study of ITr is probably the area, within TS, more closely linked with the traditional practices of close reading as literary criticism or the Spanish filología or the renewed area of genetic criticism.

Identifying ITr, mediating texts and mediating languages is very demanding in terms of textual analysis and, thus, time-consuming. This may prove to be one of the reasons preventing translation scholars from studying indirectness. In order to study indirectness as (a) a large-scale phenomenon; (b) a history- and context-bound phenomenon; and (c) a practice governed by translation norms, we still need relevant historical data on “what has been translated indirectly in a certain context”.

In every translation history project, the researcher should start by observing the backdrop and moving on to the particular case study, moving from context to text, or from macro to micro (Assis Rosa 2013, 39–40). This is why Pym (1998, 39) argues in favour of compiling lists as the first step in such projects: “little history can be construed from the analysis of isolated translations. Worse, quite superficial history can result from hypotheses that are pumped up after summary testing on just one or two cases.”

This is to say that to understand why ITr occurs, relevant data are needed on existing indirect and direct translations in different contexts. However, whereas lists of TTs (both direct and indirect) can and should be extracted from bibliographies and online catalogues, ITrs cannot be listed only in that way. As Ringmar (2007, 7) clearly puts it: “The information in catalogues and bibliographies is mostly based on paratexts on title-pages and consequently as reliable as its sources, which means that it is not always to be trusted.”

Because setting up a comprehensive cartography of the historical phenomenon of ITr is not a realistic project for a researcher or even one research team, our present knowledge concerning ITr remains fragmentary and dispersed, based mostly on case studies. For this reason, comprehensive and relevant questions as to “why ITr occurs” can be tackled only by means of hypotheses based on such case studies. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned examples suggest that multiple conclusions concerning different episodes of the history of ITr are scattered within various studies on translation history.

Does this mean we should abandon research in ITr? Most certainly not! ITr can provide relevant data for timely questions and real-life concerns. One of the many questions addressed by ITr is the need for migrant communities in an increasingly globalized world to adopt linguae francae, and the consequences therefrom. In the 2010 volume of the Handbook of Translation Studies, Lieven D’hulst meaningfully relocates the study of ITr within research in translation history. In a list of eight research questions (quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando, cuo bono), ITr is mentioned under the more general research question “ubi”/“where?” (D’hulst 2010, 4). This seems to suggest that the study of ITr may be productive in shedding light upon microcosmopolitan gestures (Cronin 2006) to engage with culturally distant Others – who can sometimes be
our next-door neighbours in hybrid global capitals. On the other hand, it may be instrumenta...of malign consequences, of the colonizing power of global languages, as the homogenizing role of English translations (Venuti 1995).

**On this special issue**

This special issue developed from a conference on “Voice in Indirect Translation” held at...of the European Society for Translation Studies. To achieve a panoramic and balanced overview, each article in this special issue was intended to bring expertise in a different language-culture, stressing main concepts, findings and methods, as well as highlighting difficulties encountered and benefits gained from conducting a particular line of research.

Marin-Lacarta’s article provides very useful guidelines for dealing with ITr. The author begins by listing bibliographic sources relevant to the study of ITrs and explaining their pros and cons. She then guides the researcher, first, through the analysis of the paratext and, afterwards, through the textual comparison between the ultimate TT and possible mediating texts. Finally, she provides convincing arguments in favour of a sociological approach to the study of indirectness. Marin-Lacarta provides an overview of the research questions posed by recent works on ITr and indicates intriguing possibilities for future research, such as the importation of new research methods from neighbouring disciplines.

Alvstad presents a reflection on collaborative ITr, based on the case-study of a contemporary Swedish series of 11 books translated indirectly into Swedish from Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil or Urdu. Against a backdrop of generalized negative evaluation of ITr which also influences decision-makers and financing institutions, her article analyses the arguments in favour of ITr put forth in the *Indiska biblioteket* (The Indian library) series.

Witt draws on extensive archival sources to present an overview of the main issues raised by the pervasive practice of ITr by means of the use of interlinear intermediates in the Soviet Union. This practice was part of a large-scale translation project for the purpose of creating a Soviet literature. On the one hand, such practices thrived, as they were institutionalized since the early 1930s, both by means of special administrative treatment within the literary system and by educational efforts. On the other, they were argued and criticized, thus producing a very prolific corpus for ITr research. More importantly, this case study on the use of the so-called podstrochniki proves the advantages of considering a flexible definition of ITr, also covering cases where the mediating text is produced in the ultimate TL, for the sole purpose of producing an ultimate TT.

Hadley suggests the consideration of a “concatenation effect hypothesis” according to which ITrs are particularly prone to omit or replace cultural specificities belonging to the source language, culture and text. Starting from the categories of the discursive identity spectrum proposed by Robyns, he tests this hypothesis by presenting selected information collected from published case studies on ITrs from a broad range of languages and cultures.

This special issue also includes an extensive (though selective) critical and annotated bibliography by Pięta, intended to serve as a stepping stone for further research on this phenomenon.

The need for process-oriented cognitive studies of indirect translating and translation didactics should be underscored. With the growing number of exchange student
programmes, classes of bilingual translation practice increasingly include students from a third linguistic context (e.g. a Chinese student attending a course in English–Portuguese translation at the University of Lisbon). Kussmaul (1991) successfully demonstrated through think-aloud protocols how translating encompasses the different stages of creative processes. It seems that entering the black box of an undergraduate translation student from China in their rendering of a Portuguese text into English, probably bridging the ST and the TT with Mandarin or another Chinese dialect, may produce relevant data that could afterwards be used in curriculum design.

As far as the historical study of indirectness is concerned, an urgent task appears to be to collect the multiple relevant conclusions and hypotheses spread across multiple case studies published in various countries or presented in different universities. This would require the creation of an international research team willing to list and (critically) read works in translation history, the corpora of which deal with ITrs. The data to be thus gathered will hopefully allow for drawing a chronology of the analysed historical episodes and mapping such episodes may enable us to identify explored and unexplored eras and contexts.

ITr is collaborative in nature. So is the research on ITr. Work hard. Work together. This is its most valuable methodological recommendation.

Notes
1. This suggestion is based on a metalinguistic survey of non-English publications listed in Pięta (2017, in this issue) and is in line with comments made by researchers consulted for the purpose of this study, although more systematic research is clearly needed. German seems to be an exception, perhaps due to the long-standing “Göttingen Sonderforschungsbereich: Die literarische Übersetzung – 1985–1997” project, which systematically researched early-modern translations via French into German.
2. This apparent predominance is not recent (it was first identified in 2006 in Ringmar [2007, 3] and reiterated in 2011 in Pięta [2012, 313]) and is also confirmed by the counting of hits obtained in November 2016 from Bibliography of Translation and Interpreting (BITRA; Franco 2001) and Translation Studies Bibliography (TSB; Gambier and van Doorslaer 2004) (all fields were queried on terms from Table 1; inverted commas were used to assure that the returned hits correspond to exact expressions).
4. For more reasons behind this weak visibility, see, for example, Dollerup (2014) or Pięta and Maia (2015).
6. In his speculation on the possible motivations for publishing indirect translations in current times, Ringmar declares that some foreign works are rendered indirectly, because of an absolute lack of target-culture translators competent in a particular source language. He also suggests that “the case of absolute lack is perhaps the least interesting as there is no real choice between indirect and direct translation” (Ringmar 2007). We tend to disagree with Ringmar on this point. Even if there was no translator available to produce a direct
translation, a choice was still made between (indirect) translation and non-translation. In our reading of the phenomenon of indirect translation, the above-mentioned case of an “absolute lack” of translators signals a cosmopolitan openness to distant cultures with which a particular target culture feels a rather urgent need to communicate.

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