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Structured literature review of published research on indirect translation (2017-2022)

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Abstract

To provide a broader framing to the contributions to this special issue on indirect literary translation, this article offers a meta-analysis of published research on indirect translation in different domains, spanning the period 2017-2022, and drawing on a structured literature review. The article first presents the rationale and method used in designing and implementing bibliographic searches, as well as in examining selected publications. It then presents the findings of the structured literature review, focusing on the date of selected publications, their authorship, translation domains, and main types of research approaches. The results show a significant increase in publications on indirect translation, with much more co-authored papers and a slight move towards author specialization in this field. Our findings also show that literature is still the prevalent domain, and empirical studies prevail, particularly those that are product-oriented and look at the quality of indirect translations. Process-oriented, participant-oriented and context-oriented studies are still a minority, and they mainly emerge from research focused on non-literary texts. The article also includes a compilation of references to publications analyzed as part of literature review. A dataset resulting from this meta-analysis is shared in open access to ensure replicability. We hope that our findings, the compilation of references and the dataset will help highlight recent developments and blind spots, serving as useful tools for researchers wanting to diversify perspectives and advance progress in the field of indirect (literary) translation.

Introduction

In 2017, Assis Rosa et al guest-edited a special issue of *Translation Studies* on indirect translation (ITr). To our best knowledge, this was the first edited multi-author volume in English that focused on translating for translation. This special issue intended to

take stock of what has been done on the topic thus far, expand/challenge our current understanding of this practice, explore future research possibilities and, ultimately, contribute to overcoming the fragmentation in ITr research, launching this area of research from a scientific basis and accelerating the production of (a common core of) knowledge. (Pięta 2017, 198).

To better address these aims, the 2017 special issue included a critical annotated bibliography, in which Pięta (2017) gathered and commented on existing published research in the field, listing dedicated publications that spanned from 1963 to 2016, and identifying several patterns that pointed to the emergence of ITr as a new subfield of research.

Since 2017, ITr has gained some traction and reaction and a number of publications have been issued. We thus want to survey the recent developments, to ‘take the temperature’ of ITr as an area of research and gauge how this area has evolved in the past 6 years. To do that, we conducted a structured literature review that helps shed light on the emerging patterns in this subfield.

We will structure the remainder of the article as follows. First, we outline the methodology used in the design and conduct of bibliographic searches, as well as in the analysis of selected publications’ content and format. We then present and discuss the results of our analysis by overviewing main trends in recent research on ITr. We end this article with recommendations for further research that are informed by the results of this review.

Method

Literature search

The first author developed the criteria and conducted the literature search as well as preliminary analysis. The two remaining authors refined the analysis and conducted subsequent bibliographic searches to minimize the risk of missing relevant records. All three authors complemented each other’s work, and contributed to the writing and editing of this structured review.

In literature search we apply the method used in Pięta (2017). To begin with, we used a compilation of references created during our earlier research on ITr (https://www.zotero.org/groups/4748118/indirect_translation, curated by Laura Ivaska). This compilation was a convenient first step as it had been continually updating Pięta’s (2017) bibliography, although in a non-systematic manner. For example, suggestions on the records to be included in the former list had been received from members of IndirecTrans network (<https://www.indirecttrans.com/>) at ad-hoc bases.

We then performed searches on multidisciplinary databases and on databases with a specific focus on Translation Studies which had been previously used in Pięta (2017). These were (in alphabetic order):

- BITRA: Bibliography of Interpreting and Translation (Franco 2001).
- Crossref
- JSTOR
- Modern Language Association International Bibliography
- Scopus
- Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge
- TSB: Translation Studies Bibliography (Gambier and van Doorslaer 2004).

The multidisciplinary databases listed are notorious for their limitations in the way they cover non-journal publications (e.g. book chapters) and languages other than English. To address this issue, we also performed searches on Google Scholar, i.e., a multidisciplinary database that has far less limitations when it comes to covering research in the humanities both in terms of publication formats and languages (Harzing and Alakangas 2017).

To define the keywords for the searches in English we drew on Assis Rosa et al’s (2017) review of metalanguage surrounding ITr. For the searches in other languages to which we had access (Finnish, French, German, Italian, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish) we drew on our previous knowledge and on advice from colleagues with pertinent language expertise.

We thus searched for the following expressions listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Keywords used in searchers in selected bibliographic databases:

Language	Terms
English	compilative translation double translation eclectic translation indirect translation intermediate translation mediated translation pivot translation relay translation relay interpreting retranslation re-translation second-hand translation secondary translation (cf. Assis Rosa et al. 2017, 115)
Finnish	epäsuora kääntäminen, välikielten kautta kääntäminen
French	traduction indirecte retraduction
German	kompilierte Übersetzung Übersetzungen aus zweiter Hand
Italian	traduzione indiretta, traduzione eclettica
Greek	Μετάφραση μέσω διάμεσων γλωσσών
Polish	przekład niebezpośredni tłumaczenie niebezpośrednie
Portuguese	indirectude tradução em segunda mão tradução indirecta
Spanish	traducción de segunda mano traducción indirecta
Swedish	indirekt översättning, reläöversättning, sekundäröversättning, kedjeöversättning

In cases where search engines yielded several hundreds or at times even several thousand hits (e.g. “pivot translation,” “ITr,” “relay translation” on Google Scholar), we ranked the hits according to the search platforms’ default criteria for relevance and we opted to restrict the screening to the first 500 hits

for each search. The 500 hits threshold seemed appropriate since by the 300th hit the search results mainly missed the criteria for inclusion that we established for this study.

In cases where the consultation of reference lists, consultations with colleagues or our prior knowledge led to relevant records that had not been identified through searches in the above-mentioned databases, we add these records too.

At the time of writing this literature review, we are reasonably certain that, through this search method, we have identified a vast majority of publications that are relevant for our aims.

To save, manage, order and annotate the items that resulted from all these searches, we used the reference-management tool EndnoteX7.

Screening of records

These saved items were screened for significance to our central theme and to the objectives of our literature review. This screening was mainly based on the abstracts and, whenever we had access to the full publication, on excerpts that contained any of the ITr-related designations from Table 1. In cases where we did not understand the language of the publication, we ran relevant passages through different machine translation engines for gisting, or we sought advice from colleagues with pertinent language competences.

Selecting records for analysis

Records that were pre-selected at this preliminary screening stage were considered at the subsequent stage of analysis, and this is when a final subset of records was ultimately delimited.

Below we list the criteria for including a record in our content analysis:

(1) Content filter: The records had to focus on ITr. We did not consider publications that fail to explicitly engage with the concept of translating from translation. For instance, many studies on news translation, on translation of the *Bible* or on the reception of *Arabian Nights* de facto analyze ITr, but do not focus on this practice per se. Including such studies would not only be unfeasible, but it would also not be in line with the aim of this study.

(2) Date filter: Our review is limited to records published from 2017 onwards. This is because earlier publications were already subject to a critical review along these lines in Pięta (2017), and, as mentioned, here in this study we wanted to check how this subfield of research has evolved since then. We started the current review in November 2022, and that is why this is the cut-off date for inclusion of any records.

(3) Type of publication filter: Our review focuses only on published, peer-reviewed research. Thus, our review does not include unpublished theses, pre-prints, conference abstracts, or conference papers delivered orally or published in proceedings that did not undergo peer-reviews. Nor does it include items in newsletters, blog entries, Wikipedia entries, discussion groups on Facebook, Twitter threads, recorded video lectures, etc.

The applied filters largely coincide with the filters from Pięta's bibliography (2017), thus allowing us to compare the findings related to the main trends in research on ITr.

Considering all the criteria listed above, our analysis was centered on 106 items. For a visual representation of the review process, see the flow chart in Figure 1.

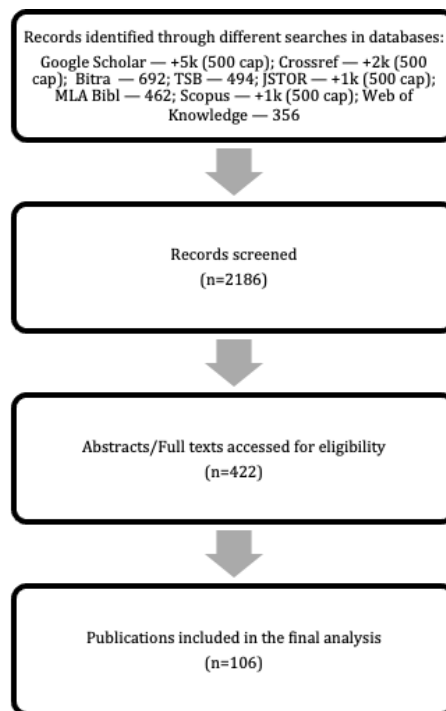


Figure 1. Outline of literature review process

Analysis

Our method for analyzing each publication was informed by Pięta's (2017) findings about the tendencies in research on ITr prior to 2017. These findings shed light on four aspects: publication dates, author profiles, translation domains, and types of research approaches. To differentiate between different types of research approaches we draw on complementary classifications presented in Gile (1998), Saldanha and O'Brien (2014) as well as Williams and Chesterman (2002). These distinctions are, first and foremost, informed by questions and aims that are guiding research reported in the analyzed publications. Data (e.g. textual, contextual) and methods (e.g. questionnaires, eye tracking, critical discourse analysis) used to generate the findings described in a given publication are not decisive factors in our classification, although we acknowledge that they surely influence the research orientation. We also acknowledge that the distinctions between different research types might sometimes be blurred, in particular in publications with multiple research aims and questions. In these cases, our classification prioritizes approaches that are foregrounded in the analysed publications. In cases of publications with balanced foci, these publications pertain to more than one category.

We thus synthesized the literature according to the aspects mentioned above. The results of this meta-analysis are discussed in detail below.

To ensure the replicability and facilitate research along the same lines using different data, we make the dataset from our study available online in open access (<https://github.com/hannapieta/indirect-translation-2017-2022>)

Results and discussion

Publication rate

According to Pięta (2017), one hundred publications on ITr were issued between 1963 (date of the first publication meeting our requirements) and 2016 (final year for Pięta’s bibliography). More than half of these publications come from the last six years covered in Pięta’s review (68 publications issued between 2011 and 2016). This corresponds to the publication rate of around eleven publications per year in this last six-year time span. In turn, according to our estimates, in the subsequent six-year period (2017–2022), 106 publications were issued. This might suggest that, in the period now in focus, the publication rate increased substantially (around 70%), corresponding to nineteen publications per year. However, we can’t also exclude the possibility that this raise is at least partly due to the improved search capabilities of the engines used in our search for relevant publications.

Author profile

In 2017, Assis Rosa et al. lamented the scarcity of collaborative efforts in ITr research, suggested through a very low number of co-authored publications. Indeed, only 7 % (7 out of 100) of publications listed in Pięta (2017) have a shared authorship. The call for more teamwork was motivated by the need for competences in multiple languages and cultures to map and analyze different indirect routes. Indeed, it is hard to expect that a single researcher will have perceptual access to numerous languages that may form ITr chains. Our data for the period 2017–2022 suggest that collaboration almost tripled, with co-authored publications amounting to 29% (31 out of 106). With this increase, the proportion of co-authorship in ITr research might be fairly in line with the general situation in Translation Studies where, as reported by Rovira-Esteva et al. (2020), already in the period 2001–2015 the proportion of co-authored publications grew from 18.1% to 26.5%. Regrettably, Rovira-Esteva et al.’s (2020) research does not go beyond 2015, so we lack more comparative data beyond that point. Interestingly, in our dataset, collaborative efforts tend to be more common in research on non-literary texts. While in research on indirect literary translation co-authorship rate is 17%, in interpreting and MT it respectively reaches 57% and 100%.

We can also note a slight movement towards authors’ specialization in ITr: in Pięta’s (2017) bibliography, a vast majority of authors is represented by only one article, chapter, book, etc. on ITr. The only exception to this rule were authors listed in Table 2, who published more than three outputs on ITr (and they did it within a relatively short time frame — 8 years between the first and last publication).

Table 2: Authors for 1963-2016 with more than 3 publications:

Author name	Timeframe of first and last publication	No. of publications
Ringmar	2007–2015	7
Boulogne	2008–2016	5

In contrast, as is clear from Table 3, in the period 2017–2022, the number of authors with over three publications more doubled (from two to four authors).

Table 3: Authors for 2017–2022 with more than 3 publications per 6-year period:

Author name	No. of publications
Pięta	9
Ivaska	8
Hadley	4
Bueno Maia	4

These authors' specialization in ITr is further substantiated by their track record of publication, as indicated by searches on Google Scholar and supplemented by information obtained from their institutional profiles online. Specifically, at least 50% of each of these authors' publications focus on ITr, suggesting a strong commitment to the field.

Translation domains

As was the case in the publications reviewed in Pięta (2017), also in the period 2017–2022 most publications on ITr delved into literary translation (61 out of 106, i.e., 58%). However, the proportion of research on non-literary ITr has increased substantially, from 6% in the period analysed by Pięta (2017) to 42% in 2017–2022. Despite this increase, hardly any of the publications on indirect literary translations looks at the digital sphere or periodicals. The focus is exclusively on printed books. However, the digital advances have made their way into the world of research on ITr via another route, namely, digital methods that investigate indirectly translated literature (i.e., Hadley 2017 and 2021, Ivaska and Ivaska 2022, Ivaska 2020c, Buts et al 2022).

As was the case in Pięta (2017), the second most frequently analyzed domain is audiovisual translation (10 out of 106 publications). The majority (7 out of 10) concerns professionally made pivot subtitling for cable TV or film festivals. Studies on amateur subtitling, on subtitling for other platforms (e.g., streaming) and on other AVT modalities done indirectly remain very rare (but see Chaume 2018 on dubbing, as well as Peng 2021 and O'Hagan 2022 on videogame localization).

The third place belongs to MT (9 publications) and the fourth to interpreting (7 publications). As regards studies on indirect (pivot) MT, all look at either statistical or neural machine translation. This is of course not surprising, considering the importance of these approaches in the analysed period. As regards interpreting, currently there appears to be a good balance between research on spoken and sign modalities, and between studies that explore relay mode in conference and community settings.

Other translation domains covered by research on ITr in the period 2017–2022 include institutional (Ustaszewski 2018 and 2021, Đorđević 2022, Rabinovich et al 2021), theatre (Brodie 2018 and 2022, Morini 2021), scientific (Hörster and Plag 2021) and news translation (Davies 2022 and Valdeón 2022), but their proportion in the analysed timeframe is marginal.

There is also a growing trend of cross-domain inquiries, i.e. studies that try to identify patterns across the board, in different subfields of translation knowledge (Assis Rosa et al 2017, Maia et al 2018, Pięta 2017, 2019, 2021, Pięta et al 2022 at a and b, St. André 2020, Torres-Simón 2021 et al).

Types of research approaches

Conceptual research

By conceptual research we mean research that discusses how concepts or theories yield new ways of understanding ITr. They thus centre around the intellectual processing of ideas (Gile 1998). In turn, empirical research focuses on the collection and processing of data (Gile 1998).

If we apply the conceptual vs empirical lens, we can see that — similar to what could be verified in Pięta (2017) for the period 1963–2016 — empirical research continues to prevail (it accounts for 88% of all publications we collected). However, there appears to have been an increase in conceptual research on ITr in (from 5 to 13).

Four of these conceptual studies focus on literary translation. Two publications by Hadley (2017 and 2021) draw on pre-existing case studies of indirect literary translations from across various cultural and historical settings to develop and test the “concatenation effect hypothesis.” This hypothesis asserts that

ITr typically omit culture-specific elements related to the ultimate source culture, and present themselves as alternative forms of rewriting instead of translations.

Still in relation to indirect literary translation, Samoyault (2022) theorises about the role that such translations might play in the stratified world system conceptualized by Casanova in her *The World Republic of Letters*. For his part, after observing French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish renditions of two English-language classics, Amaral (2019), argues for the broadening of the concept of retranslation, so that it can include ITr as one of its subsets. The key argument is that translating a previously translated text occurs beyond the boundaries set by one target language; therefore, the same-language criterion enforces an overly simplistic perspective on an exceedingly intricate reality.

Other conceptual studies shift the focus away from literature. Pöchhacker (2022) examines several interpreting scenarios through the lens of ITr, and then zooms in on two practices — speech-to-text interpreting and Deaf relay interpreting — to reveal loopholes in our disciplinary discourse about ITr in particular, and the translation versus interpreting distinction in general. The author argues for a broader definition of ITr — and in extension also of translation — to account for the technological advancements and multimodality of contemporary communication.

The remaining conceptual studies are not domain-specific. Pięta (2019 and 2021) builds on Pięta (2017) to provide complementary overviews of pre-2017 research on ITr across the board. In turn, Maia et al (2018), explore how ITr connects to the adjacent concepts of back-translation, non-translation, pseudo retranslation and self-translation. They stress that all these notions debunk the long-standing dichotomy that has characterized scholars' and users' approaches to translation.

Finally, Assis Rosa et al. (2017) defend that retranslation is just one of many possible subtypes of ITr, thereby suggesting a conceptualisation that counters Amaral's (2019) proposal. They also identify metalinguistic patterns in terminology surrounding ITr and propose a tentative classification of ITr. To develop this classification, they first draw on the comparison of existing definitions of ITr (top-down approach) and then on the analysis of selected real-life examples (bottom-up). This classification is scrutinized by St. André (2020), Davier (2022) and Ivaska (2020c). All three authors show how Assis Rosa et al.'s (2017) classification helps describe intricate translation phenomena but needs more fine-grained categories. For instance, Davier (2022) highlights the classification's inability to account for scenarios where the source, intermediary, or target texts contain quoted speech.

The next four sections will focus on the different subtypes of empirical research approaches.

Product-oriented research

This subtype of empirical studies seems to be most prevalent in the analyzed time frame (69 publications). These studies look at texts that form ITr chains, and a vast majority zooms in on the issue of quality.

What is typically analyzed is the quality of the final translation, and this is mainly the concern of studies on audiovisual translation (e.g. Casas-Tost and Bustins 2021) and to a much greater extent studies on literary translations. These studies are too numerous to mention here, but some of the most representative examples include Bąkowska 2019, Drkić 2021 and Haroon 2022. The remainder of these studies is referenced in our open-access dataset.

The quality of the steppingstone versions is analysed with much less frequency, and most often within research on interpreting (Song and Cheun 2019; Příbylová 2020; Han and Yu 2020). This is perhaps to be expected: in interpreting pivots are perhaps more likely aware that they are creating a rendition that will serve as a stepping stone for colleagues downstream. In turn, the quality of the ultimate source text has hardly ever been scrutinized in ITr research. Therefore, we lack knowledge on whether there are any specific characteristics that make a text ITr-friendly (i.e., whether there is a specific feature of the original text that mitigates the risk of information loss downstream). Some authors propose that these

characteristics might relate to plain writing (Pięta et al 2022a), but no systematic studies have been conducted to empirically test these proposals.

The question of what makes a good pivot has been approached by several studies, but a consensus has not been reached. The approach used in this group is often corpus-based. For instance, Han and Yu (2020) compared spoken and relay sign language interpreting during a live broadcast where Korean served as a pivot for interpreting English and Russian speakers into Korean Sign language. The authors found that, to ensure quality and convey the same meaning, sign language output requires more words than spoken language output. In turn, Song and Cheung (2019) examined the fluency of relay-takers' interpretations of speeches in conference settings, paying particular attention to the frequency of filled pauses in relay-takers' rendition.

Most studies that fall within the product-oriented category use manual processing and close reading of the ultimate source texts, ultimate target texts and (presumed) mediating texts as the main source of insight. However, there is a small but increasing number of product-oriented studies that use distant reading through computational, corpus-based approaches, where ITr is often studied without a reference to a mediating text. See, in this respect, Ustaszewski (2018) and (2021), Rabinovich (2017) et al, Ivaska (2020c), and Ivaska and Ivaska (2022). Essentially, all the above-mentioned studies offer different attempts to identify special linguistic features that could help determine the mediating language on which ITrs are based and/or distinguish ITrs from direct translations.

Although the number of corpus-based studies is still relatively low, these studies might be considered as signs that, as an area of research, ITr studies might be moving away from analyzing individual cases in great detail towards examining corpora as a whole, where the focus is not on one particular text but on similarities and differences within one corpus.

Context-oriented research

When compared to the previous category, this strand is very modest in size. It contains thirteen studies, eight of which delve into literary translation (namely, Allwood 2021, Alvstad 2017, Henitiuk 2021, Kavalir and Chudoba 2020, Marín-Lacarta, 2022, Pas 2017). Studies in this group inquire mainly into the settings in which ITr are taught, planned, managed, produced, and/or in which they are used, received and evaluated. The focus here is on various structures within which ITrs are embedded; on external factors (economic, ideological, institutional, political, social, religious, etc.) that impact individual participants and texts in ITr workflows; and on how ITr affect different areas of the ultimate target cultures. Case studies developed by Allwood (2021), Pas (2017), Alvstad (2017) and Lacarta (2022) all show how power struggles between languages and cultures as well as translation and editorial policies affect the choice of the mediating text/language/culture, or the way indirect literary translations are presented to the readers (i.e., whether the indirectness is put on display, camouflaged or downright hidden).

In turn, research by Chaume (2018) and O'Hagan (2022) turns attention to socio-economic and market-related factors that drive the production and circulation of ITr in the media landscape, focusing on pivot dubbing and video-games, respectively. They both uncover economic factors that determine why English is a standard intermediary language in these domains.

The impact of ITrs is analyzed in several context-oriented studies. Valdeón (2022) looks at the role of ITr in the historical development of journalism. Pięta (2018) explores how indirect literary translations affected the way communist Poland was portrayed in semi-fascist Portugal. Henitiuk (2021) enquires into how indirect literary translations helped develop Inuit literature and Canadian literature as a whole. Moreover, while Prado-Fonts (2018 and 2022) studies how Chinese culture has been portrayed in Spain via the mediation of works and concepts originated in English, French or German. In turn, Kavalir and Chudoba (2020) examine how the production of indirect literary translation impacts on students' intercultural learning experience.

Torres-Simón et al. (2021) also assume a context-oriented perspective by analyzing how European Masters in Translation (EMT) competence framework shapes pedagogical approaches to ITr (i.e., whether translation students are trained how to create a pivot version, or how to translate from one and how translation students are trained to produce to translate for and from translation).

Participant-oriented research

Also this strand is characterized by a low number of studies. It includes ten publications, of which only one is explicitly focused on literature (Witt 2017). All studies in this strand are concerned either with interpreters and translators who give or take relay in ITr processes, or with trainers who teach how to do that. Such studies provide insights into these agents' expectations and experiences. Jointly, they suggest that these agents do not dismiss ITr as a necessary evil per se, and they recognize the advantages of this practice. However, they have serious concerns about how ITr was and is being deployed. These concerns often revolve around the lack of financial compensation and public recognition of the pivot's input to the ultimate target text (e.g. Brodie 2018, Čemerin 2017), the mistrust as to the quality of the intermediate rendition (e.g. Chouc and Conde 2018, Aguirre Fernández Bravo 2022, Witt 2017, Torres-Simón et al 2021), as well as inefficient or non-existent communication channels between the person responsible for the intermediate and ultimate text rendition (e.g. Oziemblewska and Szarkowska 2022, Brodie 2022; Zhang and Eugeni 2022).

Studies in this strand also show that the role and responsibility of interpreters and translators participating in ITr workflows varies within and across domains. Studies conducted by Čemerin (2017) and Oziemblewska and Szarkowska (2022) focused on pivot template subtitling, while Aleksandrowicz (2022) investigated how the reading of literary translations published in book form can inform the creation of subtitles for the film adaptation of these books. Chouc and Conde (2018) and Aguirre Fernández Bravo (2022) explored simultaneous conference interpreting in relay mode. All these studies suggest that translators may not always be aware of their role as a pivot in the translation process. A different perspective is offered by Witt (2017), who examined interlinear translators working for the Soviet literary apparatus; by Brodie (2022), who studied the use of pivot versions in the production of theater play scripts for performance, and in Zhang and Eugeni (2022), who explore relay interpreters working in a liaison mode in crisis settings. In this second group of studies the intermediary role was clearly defined as part of the translators' or interpreters' job description.

Process-oriented research

This is the least sizable group of empirical studies in our dataset (four studies). Similar to participant-oriented group of studies, this category too is dominated by research on non-literary texts. Research in this strand concentrates on ITr processes, i.e., at how texts are translated from pre-existing translations or with the intent of being translated again. Moreover, these studies look at the obstacles that translators and other stakeholders (including translation researchers) face when handling ITr workflows, as well as at the ways in which they tackle these challenges. ITr processes have not gained much attention, and we have identified only four publications on ITr that take processes as their main object of inquiry.

One such study has been conducted by Tardel (2021), who analyses how the access to reference materials (namely the ultimate source-language video and English pivot transcription) impacts on the workload and mental processes of translators who are tasked with translating Swedish audiovisual content into German.

The second process-oriented research (Pięta et al. 2022a) proposes a set of competences needed to translate from translation in an ethical and efficient manner; and to create a pivot version that is translation-friendly in that it can be efficiently rendered further into multiple languages.

The third process-oriented study (Jin et al. 2022) scrutinizes the ITr processes used in generating subtitles for non-English cinematic content in present-day China. It identifies different ergonomic factors that lead to the use of English as a prevalent mediating language for translating non-English content into Chinese. They also show how dialogues in multilingual content tend to be subtitled using a mixed approach: direct translation for utterances originally delivered in English, and ITr for utterances in other languages.

The fourth study (Marín-Lacarta 2017) differs from the other publication in this group in that it looks at the process of researching indirect literary translation. In particular, the study explores various obstacles that translation scholars face when identifying ITrs, as well as their intervening texts and languages. The study ends by outlining a number of solutions for research design that can help mitigate these challenges.

Final considerations

To better embed the contributions to this special issue on indirect literary translation, this critical review has provided an overview of latest developments in research on ITr, identifying emerging trends, imbalances and blind spots.

Our findings indicate a significant rise in publications on ITr, with a tendency towards author specialization and an increasing number of co-authored publications that is particularly accentuated in studies on non-literary texts. Literature remains the domain that attracts predominant attention from ITr researchers, and most scholars in this area look into printed books that are translated indirectly. Empirical studies prevail, specifically those that are product-oriented and examine the quality of ultimate target texts. Studies focusing on digital texts, as well as context-oriented, participant-oriented, and especially process-oriented studies are still relatively uncommon, and emanate from scholars working in areas other than literary translation.

Our hope is that the insights yielded through this structured review, as well as the extensive list of references and the resulting dataset will work as a useful tool for researchers working in the field of indirect (literary) translation. It might help generate ideas about which aspects of indirect (literary) translations have already been studied in greater depth, and which remain largely unexplored. We would like to encourage the readers to inform us of any items in the reference list that they think are missing or need amending. We will be updating this list at regular intervals, and the results will be available on the website of the IndirecTrans network (www.indirectrans.com).

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