What can research on indirect translation do for translation studies? An introduction

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This special issue is about indirect translation (ITr). To counter the traditional disinterest of Translation Studies in researching ITr, it explores and showcases what research on the topic can do for our discipline as a whole. This introductory article prepares the ground for and provides an overview of what is discussed in the seven articles included in the special issue. Before introducing the contributions to this issue, we briefly explain the terminology and definitions used throughout this issue. In the spirit of transparency, and making this special issue useful to everyone in Translation Studies, this introduction also devotes space to discussing how this issue came into being, sharing some of the lessons learnt through guest editing.

1. Terms and definitions

In English (the lingua franca of our discipline), ITr is known by many names (bridge translation, pivot translation, relay translation, second-hand translation, retranslation, etc.). What researchers call this practice has traditionally depended on their field of specialisation and their linguistic tradition (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b). For instance, in audiovisual or machine translation the practice tends to be labelled 'pivot' or 'bridge' translation whereas in interpreting, 'relay' seems to be a more common term. At the same time, 'relay translation' is often the main terminological choice in English-language research

produced by Chinese-language scholars, while 'ITr' has been prioritised in publications focusing on Iberian language settings (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b).

We, the guest editors of this special issue, did not want to impose any particular terminology on the authors contributing to this issue, as streamlining terminology was not our goal. However, we did foreground the term 'ITr' in the call for papers. Perhaps for this reason most authors in this special issue have generally privileged the label 'ITr', although with varying degrees of consistency. This preference seems particularly clear in the titles and abstracts, which are meant to be representative of the content of the full articles. This preference is in line with what appears to be a current metalinguistic trend, whereby 'ITr' seems to be increasingly used in different subfields of research (see Ringmar [2007], Pięta [2012], and Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia [2017b] for indicators of this trend). In this issue, the only clear exception to this tendency in terminology is Franz Pöchhacker's article on interpreting, where 'relay interpreting' is used predominantly. The reasons for the author's terminological choice can be found in the article itself.

As regards definitions, in a narrow sense, ITr means a translation done via a third language – a language that is different from the language of the original and the language of the final translation (Kittel 1991; Pym 2011, 80). This definition implies that when defining ITr we should use the language criterion: at least three languages need to be involved. In a broader sense, ITr means a translation of a translation (Gambier 1994). This broad definition does not impose any criterion related to the number or type of languages, texts, modes, agents, and so on. The only criterion has to do with the genesis of the text: to be classified as ITr, a text needs to be based on an earlier translation. In this broad sense, ITr can result from an intralingual, intercultural, or intermodal operation, retranslation, back-translation, or a combination of them.

Just as with the terminology, we did not impose any definition of ITr on the contributors. Defining what ITr is – and what it is not – was not our aim: defining conceptual limits at the outset might have been counterproductive, as this special issue was meant to be exploratory in nature. We wanted to see perspectives from different subfields of translation studies on what different types of ITr could and could not be for our discipline. Indeed, the authors contributing to this special issue oscillate between narrower and broader understandings of ITr, often bringing them together.

2. How this special issue came into being

2.1 Why this topic?

2.1.1 *Historical and present-day importance*

As a practice, ITr is old. It is present across many translation domains, although with a varying degree of intensity and visibility. Some of the most commonly mentioned historical examples relate to the translation of literary, philosophical, sacred, and scientific texts, such as children's classics (e.g., the work of the Brothers Grimm), the *I Ching*, the *Bible*, or texts disseminated through the so-called Toledo School (Gambier 2003).

Today ITr is present across different fields. For instance, to facilitate global distribution of non-English language content, over-the-top media services (e.g., Netflix, Hulu) streamline subtitle creation processes through English-language templates; that is, subtitle files timed to audio (see Georgakopoulou 2003, 220). In such centralised workflows, an audiovisual programme in, say, Korean, is first translated into English and from there into multiple other languages. For a recent well-known example of such an indirect trajectory in the current media landscape, see the so-called *Squid Game* controversy (Cho 2021; Ravindran 2022).

Another present-day example of ITr is the circulation of science news during the pandemic. For instance, preliminary results from "The Circulation of Science News in the Covid-19 Era" project[1] show how Covid-related international science news travelled to Flanders through ITr. In an email to authors, dated 6 July 2022, Jack McMartin outlines a basic schema of such ITr:

(1) A study is conceived by non-English researchers who use a language other than English to develop and conduct the research and oftentimes draft early versions of the results (a scientific study) in the non-English language preferred by those researchers.

(2) An English-language publication is produced, often by the researchers themselves (self-translation), often facilitated by machine or human translators.

(3) A laymen's text is produced (intralingual translation), e.g. in the form of a press release written by a public information officer/press officer at the host university or research institution, often in multiple language versions and addressing multiple audiences (English > the international press; regional languages > the regional press).

(4) The English-language laymen's text circulates to journalists all over the world via EurekAlert (which essentially has a monopoly on the market for science news releases).

(5) Science journalists working for news outlets in Flanders (newspapers but also the national press agency Belga) select stories of interest from EurekAlert and produce a Dutch-language story for their outlet. Journalists rely on the materials provided in the English-language press release, which they often augment with other sources,

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[1] https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/vertaalwetenschap/english/interdisciplinary-projects/science-news

including the original scientific publication but also coverage on the same study by other news outlets, most of which are well-known, English-language newspapers.

As is clear from the above examples, ITr is not limited to a particular region and it is a matter of (semi)peripheral and (hyper)central languages alike (Heilbron 2010). The former group of languages often works as the ultimate source or target languages. They often need to deal with the consequences of ITr, or use it to make their products accessible worldwide. The latter group are often stepping-stone languages, via which ITr happens, and they act as filters and gatekeepers for many interperipheral relations.

2.1.2 *Promising future*

Global and regional lingua francas change with time, place, and domain, and so does the intensity with which ITr occurs in different settings. However, nothing indicates that ITr will disappear or significantly decrease in its entirety. In an increasingly interconnected world and multilingual societies, the need for ITr may even grow, especially if the aim is to provide access to all, irrespective of the language people speak (see United Nations General Assembly 2015; Ji 2021), and considering the low number of people who learn languages other than English as foreign languages in different regions (Looney and Lusin 2018; European Commission 2021).

There are currently over 7000 languages spoken around the world (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2022), which means there are about fifty million translation combinations. It is difficult to imagine finding translators who are available to provide translations in all those language pairs and directions; even the European Union (EU), with just twenty-four official languages (resulting in 552 language combinations), has concluded that it might be more

efficient to just have everything first translated into English, French, and/or German and then from those languages into the other official EU languages (Katsarova 2011).

Of course, a part of this need for ITr may be covered by the use of lingua francas. However, not everyone speaks a lingua franca; for example, according to Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2022), 82% of the world's population does not speak English, and some of those who do, might not know it well enough to access important, potentially life-saving or life-changing information (e.g., on when to take booster shot of COVID-19 vaccine, or how to apply for a refugee status). Moreover, the use of a lingua franca for communication between peripheral languages does not come without a cost: it can contribute to the decline and even death of peripheral languages, as they may lose their capacity to express relevant meaning (Pięta, Bueno Maia and Torres-Simón 2022).

A part of the need for ITr may also be covered by the use of machine translation. This scenario seems to be implicitly promoted in a recent publication by the European Commission (2022, 6), which provides recommendations for branches of the translation industry that deal with "cultural and creative works, including books, films and plays." After drawing a parallel between machine translation and ITr (both associated with substandard outputs), the publication recommends that ITr "should not be encouraged as a long-term solution," while advances in machine translation technology "should be monitored closely" (10). The underlying rationale seems to be that the quality of machine translation will likely improve, but the quality of ITr will not.

This rationale seems problematic for two reasons. First, training on how to translate from a translation or with a further translation in mind has not been systematically integrated into translation curricula, and there is little research-driven advice on how to do it well (see section 2.1.4). However, there has recently been research on this front (Chouc and Conde 2018;

Pięta, Bueno Maia and Torres-Simón 2022), and this might help improve the quality of translations done indirectly.

Second, pivot approaches play a role in many machine translation technologies. This is because neural machine-translation methods require massive datasets to train systems, and these are difficult to obtain for many different languages. This means that to translate between languages with scarce digital resources (say, Maltese and Swahili), some machine-translation engines might use another language as a bridge – the pivot is there, but it is not human.

Furthermore, the quality of machine-translation outputs for rare, low-resource combinations is often substandard when compared to the quality of outputs obtained for high-resource language pairs. As suggested in the above-mentioned report by the European Commission (2022), major advances linked to issues of quality might be on the horizon. They might come, for example, from machine-translation systems with small datasets. However, even if quality improves, machine translation can hardly work as a one-size-fits-all solution that will replace ITr (Pięta, Bueno Maia and Torres-Simón 2022). This is because machine translation brings about its own challenges (ethical, environmental, etc.). Equally important is the fact that machine translation creates new demands and expands skill sets linked with translation (i.e., the translator's role in the industry becomes even more versatile). These skill sets are related to weighing up the risk involved in using this tool in particular situations, authorising the validity of a machine-translation output, and so on (Pym and Torres-Simón 2021). In such a scenario, ITr workflows might also be needed, but in forms that differ from the ones we know today.

2.1.3 *Scarcity of research*

As a subfield of research, ITr is still in its infancy and has a limited scope. As regards the history of ITr studies, reflections, and efforts to promote large-scale research date back to the

early works of the founding father of descriptive translation studies. Toury (1988) insisted that translation researchers cannot afford to ignore ITr because it can help unveil systematic relationships between and within cultures.

Toury's work is often labelled a seminal publication for research on ITr (e.g., Marin-Lacarta 2017). However, ITr was foregrounded in works preceding Toury's foray into this practice, but which enjoyed lesser exposure because they were not written in English. For instance, Popovič's (1968) theorisations are underpinned by the assumption that the source text of a translation is not equal to 'the original', and hence a translation can derive from an already translated text. Other pioneering publications emerged from scholars associated with the so-called Göttingen group (e.g., Von Stackelberg 1984, 1987; Graeber and Roche 1988). To our best knowledge, there has been only one systematic study that maps early discourses on ITr in non-English language traditions of translation research (Schultze 2014). Therefore, many pioneering reflections on ITr might still be frozen in time.

Despite these early calls, systematic research on ITr only started in the mid-2000s (see Pięta [2017] for a bibliographic survey), and seems to have accelerated in the last few years (see the IndirecTrans Network [2022] for some indicators of this acceleration).

As regards the scope of research, there are still gaps in our understanding of ITr. The summary below draws and expands on Pięta's (2017, 2021) accounts of the state of dedicated research.

- Publications that look at present-day instances of ITr are relatively rare and recent. For examples, see Alvstad (2017) or Tardel (2021).

- Studies on relay interpreting are said to outnumber studies on other types of ITr up until 2011 (St. André 2019, 471). While this has not been confirmed empirically, it seems that today most efforts in this subfield centre on literary translation and not on

interpreting. For some of the latest developments in research on relay interpreting, see Chouc and Conde (2018), Song and Cheung (2019), and Han and Yu (2020).

- Chinese, Iberian, and Nordic languages feature most frequently in publications on ITr as the ultimate source or target languages. For examples, see Marín-Lacarta (2012) or Allwood (2021).

- ITr is normally analysed from the perspective of the source or ultimate target culture. Hardly any studies explicitly look at ITr through the prism of a lingua franca as a pivot language.

- Also rare are studies that apply (and not just mention) particularly open definitions, looking at ITr produced not via a different language but, for example, a different mode (e.g., where a message passes from painting to dance, and then to poetry). A noteworthy exception to this trend is Peng (2022).

- The focus so far has been mostly on one platform, mode, and medium through which ITr is carried out: the printed book. Studies looking into digital areas where ITr occurs or digital methods in the study of ITr are still exceptions; see, for example, Ivaska (2020), and Tardel (2021).

- Most studies are anchored in the equivalence or cultural turn paradigms, focusing on the comparison of shifts introduced in the mediating and final translations (e.g., Haroon 2022, Gökce Vaz de Carvalho 2021). They thus rarely capitalise on other developments and trends in translation research (e.g., the so-called cognitive, technological, or outward turns in Translation Studies).

- While there are many publications that de facto analyse ITr and provide useful insights into this practice, they do not explicitly use the label 'ITr' (or adjacent terminology), nor do they engage with the concept (e.g., Aleksandrowicz 2022).

There are surely many known and unknown unknowns about ITr. Therefore, there are many opportunities for the growth of dedicated research.

2.1.4 *Dismissal of ITr*

Traditionally, ITr has been frowned upon by translation research and training institutions alike. In terms of research, St. André (2019, 471) has observed that the consensus in translation studies seems to be that studying ITr "will add nothing to the total sum of human knowledge." Similarly, Dollerup (2008, 13) has suggested that it

> is not worthwhile making relay the object of major scholarly studies. At best such critical studies can argue that special types of error that turn up frequently in specific language combinations in relay chains are typical of these chains.

This dismissal relates to the common views that ITr is an exclusive concern of peripheral languages – however, these languages "have not been a central object of attention within mainstream Translation Studies" (Branchadell 2011). Additionally, this dismissal might also originate from some taxonomies used in Translation Studies, where ITr is sometimes seen not as translation proper but instead as an adjacent concept (see Bueno Maia, Pięta, and Assis Rosa 2018). It might also be motivated by misperceptions that ITr is the product of a bygone era and limited to the translation of literature and sacred texts. Yet another factor that aggravates the mistrust is that sometimes it is impossible to obtain a satisfactory degree of certainty in the identification of ITr, or of the mediating languages and texts, although some efforts have been made to improve the methodological efficiency (Marin-Lacarta 2017; Ustaszewski 2019; Ivaska 2020).

As regards approaches to ITr in training, many trainers teach students how to translate from translation and some teach how to translate with a further translation in mind (Torres-Simón et al. 2021). However, certain oversights can be detected at the institutional level: there are hardly any explicit references to ITr in university programmes, curricula, mainstream taxonomies of translation competences or – up until recently – published, research-based guidelines on how to translate from translation or with a further translation in mind (Torres-Simón et al. 2021). In other words, pedagogical approaches in this area seem to be grass-roots initiatives rather than the result of top-down decision-making processes.

This dismissal of ITr is one of the forces that hinders developments in the subfield of ITr. This is the problem we want to address in the special issue.

2.2 Why this journal and these articles?

To have a better perspective on the content of this special issue, it might be useful to know more about the editorial practices through which this special issue came about, as these editorial practices inevitably impact the type of scientific work reported here. Although the journal's submission guidelines shed some light on this matter, the various stages and decision-making processes in the editorial workflow are not always evident to authors, and they tend to be invisible to readers. To increase transparency, below we outline some of the most relevant aspects of our behind-the-scenes work as guest editors.

The idea to publish a collection of articles on how the study of ITr can contribute to Translation Studies emerged during one of the meetings of the IndirecTrans network, and in particular the preparatory work for a thematic panel to be held during the EST 2019 Congress in Stellenbosch. *Target* seemed like an ideal venue for such a collection, not only because of the journal's comprehensive scope (not restricted to any branch of Translation Studies, any part of the world, or scholarly approach) but also because of the journal's historical role in leading

disciplinary meta-reflection on the evolution of Translation Studies. In line with *Target*'s mission, we wanted to see how our object of study can contribute to the development of translation research, thus countering the common dismissal of ITr.

In response to the open call for abstracts that circulated in late 2019, we received fifty-one proposals. All proposals were vetted following the *modus operandi* outlined below.

We first considered the overall quality. Each of us guest-editors vetted the proposals individually, giving scores for theoretical soundness, methodological awareness, relevance, innovation, readability, and feasibility. This allowed us to shortlist twenty-four proposals with a high potential to meet *Target*'s standards for quality.

Afterwards, we considered the coherence of the special issue. As a first criterion in this regard, we considered translation domains, and decided to prioritise proposals focusing on domains that have been less explored in research on ITr. Essentially, at this stage, we accepted proposals on ITr of audiovisual, legal, news, philosophical, and sacred texts, as well as those focused on relay interpreting.

We then looked at the platforms, modes, and media covered in the proposals. Again, we prioritised proposals that promised to contribute a novel perspective from the standpoint of studies on ITr. In a nutshell, this means that, from the proposals selected up to this point, we excluded proposals on printed books and prioritised the digital sphere. Thus, at this stage we rejected proposals related to sacred, philosophical, and legal texts.

Then, we considered the proposals in terms of their geographic scope. High-quality proposals were dealing mostly with ITr practices in Europe and Asia, and we aimed to maintain a good balance of contributions from these two regions.

Finally, to make the special issue innovative and coherent but at the same time representative of current trends (as mentioned, literature is still a predominant text type in ITr research), we decided to include two proposals on ITr of literary texts that were most cutting-

edge in terms of methodology – using methods from the digital humanities to study ITr – and had the highest potential of addressing the key question raised by our special issue.

After this long vetting process, we were in a position to accept eleven proposals. This means that around 80% of abstract proposals were rejected without being moved to the next stage. Eventually, we received only ten full-length manuscripts (one author withdrew their submission for personal reasons). These ten manuscripts underwent at least one round of double-blind peer review by referees whom we selected based on their expertise in the topic and/or the method. We tried to have each manuscript reviewed by one senior researcher (who has actively participated in meta-reflection on the evolution of Translation Studies so far and has already had personal experience with ITr research) and one newer/younger scholar (in order to have a certain historical detachment and a fresher perspective on how our discipline has evolved and deals with ITr).

Out of the ten manuscripts, seven were accepted for publication and three rejected after the first or second rounds of review and final editorial check. This means that, at the stage of full-manuscript vetting, the rejection rate was 30%. Rejections were mostly due to the following reasons:

- Irrelevance to the central theme of the special issue (initial proposals led to manuscripts not centred on ITr and/or not addressing the central question of this special issue).

- Lack of clarity (different sections did not form a coherent, meaningful whole; theoretical background and data analysis were not connected).

- Insufficient literature review (relevant sources were neglected or used uncritically, giving a biased picture of earlier research).

- Lack of methodological explicitness or awareness (key terms left undefined; essential information about the data or method missing; data selection not sufficiently justified with regard to the research aims).

- Lack of evidence (claims not supported by data; conclusions not sufficiently justified by the analysis).

One of the proposals to this special issue was co-authored by Laura Ivaska, who is also a guest-editor of this special issue. This submission underwent two rounds of double-blind review, and both rounds were handled without Laura's involvement (the process was overseen by the two remaining guest-editors, who relied on the feedback provided by two experts from outside of the editorial team).

3. What can we learn from this special issue?

Before we delve into how the seven articles that follow address the central question on the benefits of ITr research for translation studies, we will first critically summarise the content of each article in this special issue.

3.1 Critical summary of individual articles

The opening article, by **Ilmari Ivaska and Laura Ivaska**, proposes a new methodology (machine learning) for the task of identifying ITr. The authors ask: to what extent can we computationally identify ITr on the basis of translations' linguistic features? And to what extent can computers identify the mediating and ultimate source languages of ITr? In their experiment, computational identification of ITr and the mediating languages involved does not bring reliable results. This is because the ultimate source languages have a greater impact on the linguistic make-up of the ITr than the respective mediating languages. The authors conclude that, for this computational method to be successful, translation researchers will first need to

find a way to control for the effect of the ultimate source language. This is thus one of the pending tasks which might help overcome some of the methodological issues in the subfield.

While the research informing the opening article uses data from literary translation and is methodological in its focus, the next two articles look at news translation and make a conceptual contribution. **Lucile Davier** applies Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) taxonomy of ITr to news stories that were produced by two multilingual news agencies (one based in Switzerland and the other in Canada). She asks: To what extent can this typology help describe the complex translational phenomena that are observable in news writing? According to the author, the typology helps classify and describe many fuzzy source-mediating target-text configurations found in journalistic translation but at the same time the typology needs fine-tuning and expansion, as it does not have room for certain practices that are common in news translation (e.g., instances of reported speech).

The next article, by **Roberto A. Valdeón**, complements Lucile Davier's article. The author asks: What role has ITr played in the history of journalism? And, what can this role tell us about the role played by translation at large? To address these questions, the article traces and conceptualises historical instances of ITr in journalistic texts, with a particular focus on the early modern period and the birth of journalism. Roberto A. Valdeón understands ITr to include retranslation, back-translation, and translation via a third, fourth, n^{th} language or text. Findings show that, in news production, ITr – and by extension also translation in general – is not hidden, as is often the case in literary translation, but rather ignored. This ignorance can be explained by the specific features of news translation: journalists do not consider that what they do is translation; and journalistic source texts are unstable and difficult to locate (due to complex multi-author, multisource, multidirection situations).

The next part of this special issue also encompasses a pair of highly complementary studies, this time focusing on game localization and the adjacent domain of audiovisual

translation. Approaching ITr from the perspective of game localization, **Minako O'Hagan** asks: How do economic factors affect translation decisions in game localization (and vice-versa)? What is the impact of different industry stakeholders on a game's production, circulation, and consumption? And, how can the ITr lens help us theorise the above-mentioned understudied aspects of game localization? By offering an overview of different historical and current practices, and then zooming in on a case study of a high-profile Japanese game publisher, Minako O'Hagan shows that the use of English as a default pivot is part of a commercial mechanism through which Japanese companies maximise profit and prioritise North America as their key market. The ITr focus helps us lay bare the industry's differentiation between high-priority and low-priority markets: voice over is reserved for priority markets, whereas other markets need to make do with subtitles based on a fully localised version, typically in English.

In the next contribution, focusing mostly on contemporary Chinese moviescape, **Haina Jin, Yichi Zhang and Xiaomin He** raise the following questions: How widespread is ITr in subtitled and dubbed foreign films intended for cinematic screening? What does the ITr process look like? And, how does this process affect the ultimate target text? The authors start by tracing the historical development of the import of foreign films since the early twentieth century, and then focuses on the trends in 2018 and 2019, analysing data from an array of sources (including databases, film yearbooks, and interviews). To complete the picture, the article shifts the focus to one case study – the ITr process of one Dutch film, and shares results of a textual analysis of Chinese indirect subtitles for this film. ITr is a standard practice for non-English films, with English as the typical pivot. Multilingual films where English is the main language are rendered using a mixed approach: English dialogues are translated directly and non-English dialogues indirectly. In the analysed case study, most of the Chinese indirect subtitles convey exactly the messages of the ultimate source text. Unjustified deviations in the

Chinese subtitles are due to mistakes or ambiguities in the English pivot. However, that attenuation of taboo language is only present in the Chinese version is possibly due to censorship.

The last two articles bring us to the domain of interpreting. **Franz Pöchhacker**'s contribution is primarily meta-analytical. It first critically surveys earlier scholarship on relay interpreting, identifying main research topics, lamenting the dearth of dedicated studies, and outlining avenues worth in-depth research. The article then problematises selected interpreting scenarios through the prism of ITr, focusing on such parameters as mode, modality, policy, linguality, multimodality, and technology. The problematisation of selected, present-day scenarios – related to Deaf relay interpreting and speech-to-text interpreting relying on speech recognition technology and combined with machine translation – aims to test assumptions about what makes ITr indirect, thereby broadening Translation Studies' understanding of what ITr can be.

The special issue closes with **Elena Aguirre Fernández Bravo**'s article, which reports on participant-oriented research involving Spanish interpreters who work at the EU institutions. The author asks several interrelated questions about giving and taking relay in conference settings: To what extent can a pivot hinder or improve the relay-taker's task? What makes a good pivot? How do you ensure quality of relay arrangements, considering the immediacy required by simultaneous interpreting? And, finally, what can Translation Studies learn from professional pivots and relay-takers? To address these questions, the author analyses feedback from Spanish EU-accredited interpreters, elicited through a focus-group session and an online questionnaire completed by thirty respondents. The findings suggest that whether a pivot is a stumbling block or a stepping stone depends to a large extent on the pivot's quality, and that a good pivot needs to be instantly identifiable as trustworthy. The study also shows that, when selecting pivots, relay-takers may consider such aspects as their own competencies in their C

language, the language in which session documentation is drafted, booth colleagues' advice, and directionality (whether the pivot works into or out of their A language).

3.2 Lessons about the relevance of ITr research for Translation Studies

When viewed together, the seven articles included in this collection extend the state-of-the-art of research not only in terms of the subfields of Translation Studies covered, but also in terms of the linguistic areas discussed and the methods applied in the analyses. As a whole, this special issue moves away from historical perspectives and, above all, the printed book paradigm (at least as far as the ultimate target text is concerned), thereby shifting the focus to the digital (digital platforms or, in the case of literature, digital methods of analysis) and oral mediums. As for the languages involved, two of the contributions take us outside of Europe, providing insights into ITr concerning Japanese and Chinese as the ultimate source or target language. Furthermore, the contributions in this issue are focused mainly on the twenty-first century, a timeframe rarely covered by research dedicated to ITr. When history is in focus, the contributions provide insights into less-studied areas of ITr: news translation and interpreting. In terms of methodological apparatus, the contributions featured use methods ranging from corpus studies and questionnaires to textual analysis, meta-analysis, and fieldwork. Importantly for the purpose of this special issue, contributions included show that ITr research can help Translation Studies in at least three different forms. These are discussed in the remainder of this section.

3.2.1 *Challenging established concepts and common assumptions*

This special issue prompts us to rethink some of the foundational notions of our discipline, starting with the concept of **translation**. For instance, Franz Pöchhacker's article raises questions about the key components and boundaries of translation. By outlining a specific pivot configuration – intralingual, intermodal, and fully automatised relay interpreting – the author argues that human agency and change of language are not essential components of translation. If Translation Studies wants to keep up with technology-driven advances in the translation profession, it needs to move away from narrow definitions of translation which presuppose that interlinguality and human intervention are an indispensable part of every translation process.

In a similar vein, Lucile Davier's contribution provides a conceptual basis that allows us to consider as translation many phenomena that have traditionally been excluded from translation scholarship because they are oral, temporary, or unacknowledged. A case in point are interlingual or intralingual reformulations in situations where a journalist authoring a story asks colleagues for help or where pieces of news transfer from public-relations agencies to news agencies and other media outlets. Additionally, the results and methodological parameters discussed in the opening article by Ilmari Ivaska and Laura Ivaska help pinpoint specific linguistic characteristics of translations. The study shows that we need more research on ITr precisely to understand whether and how translations derived from original texts differ from translations derived from translations. Such insight might teach us about the translation process and products in general.

Moreover, this special issue invites us to rethink the notions of **source and target text**. By looking into the complex, multisource genesis of many ITrs, the articles in this collection show that the label 'source' in 'source text' is misleading. It promotes an illusion of the pristine condition of the texts on which the translator is working, whereas there are a plethora of instances where these texts contain translations of earlier texts. For illustrative examples see, for instance, Roberto A. Valdeón's and Franz Pöchhacker's contributions in this volume.

The ITr focus also shows that the appellation 'target' in 'target text' contributes to the fallacy of final destination, thus ignoring realities where the target text is a stepping stone to subsequent renditions. The details of interpreting and subtitling processes described in the articles by Elena Aguirre Fernández Bravo, as well as by Haina Jin, Yichi Zhang and Xiaomin He, clearly illustrate such situations.

Added to this is the fact that the joint usage of 'source' and 'target' presupposes a unidirectional relation, thus excluding situations where the target text leads to the reshaping of the source text, and where these texts can be considered as mutual translation. A case in point are 'international editions' of games discussed in Minako O'Hagan's contribution, where Japanese games are first heavily adapted to serve English users, and then re-adapted back into Japanese, to be commercialised twice on the same (Japanese) market. Equally problematic is the fact that the 'source' and 'target' dichotomy is not flexible enough to accommodate realities where a translation derives from and leads to multiple further translations – see, for example, the indirect trajectories of news translation examined in Lucile Davier's article. Indeed, as discussed in this article, complementary, less binary taxonomies developed to analyse ITr can provide a metalanguage that better describes the complex textual situations that journalistic translation researchers face on an everyday basis.

Furthermore, research on ITr also invites us to examine **direct translation** – a concept that is largely undertheorised in our discipline. For instance, the above-mentioned example outlined in Franz Pöchhacker's article provides foundations for arguments that in every translation process there is always some kind of mediation, and hence also some kind of indirectness (see Pięta 2021). So, is there any such a thing as a direct translation? How sustainable is this concept?

Finally, a common assumption that this special issue helps debunk is the oft-quoted **inferiority of L2 translation**, where translators work out of their "native" language (Whyatt

2019, 80). Indeed, results from Elena Aguirre Fernández Bravo's case study suggest that there is hardly any difference in the number of relay-takers who prefer pivots working into their L1 over pivots working into L2 because both options (L2 and L1) reportedly bring about advantages and disadvantages for relay processes.

3.2.2 *Enhacing intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogues*

As is clear from the diversity of translation domains covered in this special issue, ITr has manifestations in and is spread across different areas of practice. It can thus be conveniently used as a "**bridge concept**" (Chesterman 2017, 38) that enhances the interconnection between different branches of the largely fragmented discipline of Translation Studies. Comparing and contrasting what researchers in different subfields have learned about ITr practices, and how they have learned it (e.g., using which theoretical and methodological approaches, hypotheses, data), can help us work towards the unity of knowledge, promoting the ideal of consilience in our discipline (Chesterman 2017).

In this sense, articles in this special issue invite us to reconsider some intradisciplinary distinctions, especially the seemingly fixed **dichotomy between translation and interpreting**. This is particularly evident in Franz Pöchhacker's article, which considers relay interpreting as a particularly complex subset of ITr and shows how such a view is beneficial for Translation Studies as a discipline in that it helps broaden its increasingly multifaceted object of study.

Moreover, the ITr focus opens up and expands entry points for **collaborations with experts from other disciplines**. For example, Roberto A. Valdeón's article discusses how studying the role of journalistic ITr in the circulation of information in the early modern period can help us better understand the historical development of news production. The article also

argues that the ITr lens can add insights to dialogues involving both Translation and Communication Studies, stressing the need for a renewed problematisation of translation practices in journalism.

3.2.3 *Enhancing methodological awareness*

The methodological approach adopted in Ilmari Ivaska and Laura Ivaska's article is relevant to the broader Translation Studies community because it lays bare (potentially serious) methodological shortcomings of previous studies on direct translations, namely undisclosed variables, and in particular the number of intervening authors and translators, which in turn make it impossible to evaluate the generalisability of the results.

In turn, Lucile Davier's contribution shows that the search for traces of exact origins of translations may entail much guesswork due to the unstable, non-linear, and ephemeral nature of many texts involved in the translation process. The article thus suggests that translation scholars need to remember that their analyses should permit some uncertainty.

3.3 Other takeaways and future outlooks

There are many other aspects that this issue could not cover or expand on in sufficient detail, but which could potentially help unleash the potential of ITr research. For example, the practice of ITr is intrinsically linked to some pressing contemporary concerns, such as **(in)accessibility and (in)equality**. Research that engages with these concerns from the standpoint of ITr can thus help add nuance and complexity to reflections about the role of Translation Studies in ensuring sustainable development.

Furthermore, there are many **parallels between machine translation and ITr**: both are widely (ab)used by society and industry and mistrusted by translation professionals and

trainers alike. However, the relationship between these two practices remains to be theorised. How can lessons learnt from research on ITr contribute to progress in the expanding field of machine translation literacy (and vice-versa)?

Finally, lessons learnt from our editorial process provide food for thought that can be seen as collateral takeaways for the Translation Studies community. These are linked mostly to **peer review**. ITr is a small field, and reviewers can often recognise the author of a manuscript they have been invited to review from the writing style or topic. Therefore, ensuring a truly double-blind review is often difficult. The situation is further complicated by the difficulty of defining what constitutes a conflict of interest. For example, does it make you too close to the author if you were their teacher for a week or two at a summer school? Or if you both actively serve on a tight-knit committee or board? Or when you are trying to publish in one and the same special issue? Open peer review might offer some solutions to this ethical dilemma, but not to all.

Being open about who is writing what could perhaps help overcome another type of problem we faced during the editing process: What do you do if you have several proposals that address the same or closely related topics – can the authors be put in dialogue with each other during the writing and editing process, so that they can build upon each other's work? As the delay between submitting a proposal (or even a full-length manuscript) and actually having the article published can be considerably long in our field, enabling these kinds of mutually benefitting discussions would seem sensible. But, can that be done without risking the anonymity of the prospective authors? To what extent is this kind of behind-the-scenes activity acceptable in different traditions of translation research, or for different generations of translation scholars? Hopefully the work of the recently founded Council of Editors of Translation and Interpreting Studies for Open Science might bring some clarity to these types of issues (see https://tisopencouncil.eu/).

We hope that the content of this special issue will inspire more research in the subfield of ITr, providing further evidence of the validity of scholarship on ITr, and paving the way to general progress in this area. We also hope that the outline of this special issue's lifecycle and challenges will be useful for translation scholars.

In lieu of conclusions, we would like to recall that at the initial stage of abstract vetting, we shortlisted twenty-four proposals but eventually we invited only eleven of them to the full-manuscript phase. In other words, we needed to exclude thirteen highly promising proposals only for the sake of the coherence of the special issue and because one issue of *Target* can accommodate only a limited number of articles. Many of these proposals focused on indirect literary translation, therefore forming a coherent whole. We were convinced that these proposals deserved an outlet too, and so we decided to approach *Perspectives*, managing to secure a slot for a spin-off special issue consisting of these contributions. This spin-off is due soon after the current special issue of *Target* is published. We thus invite *Target* readers to engage with the offshoot publication, too, as it offers a thematic counterbalance (by foregrounding literary translation), completes the picture of the current state of research in ITr studies, and picks up some of the threads that are initiated here.

Acknowledgements

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