

Indirect translation in translator training: Taking stock and looking ahead¹

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In order to translate and be translated, low-diffusion languages often use strategies that differ from those used by widely spoken languages and therefore create particular challenges for translators. One such strategy is indirect translation. Since there are conflicting opinions about this practice within the translation community, it is unclear to what extent indirect translation is present in translator training. In order to shed some light on this issue, this article reports on an exploratory study that looked at mentions of indirect translation in the European Masters in Translation (EMT) competences, at references to indirect translation in the syllabi of EMT programs, at tasks to develop specific skills of indirect translation in mainstream training textbooks and at the responses to a survey addressed to translator trainers. Results suggest that indirect translation is overlooked at the institutional level (in the list of EMT competences, in the official EMT syllabi and in published textbooks) but still reaches future translators working with low-diffusion languages via in-class tasks developed by a significant part of surveyed trainers.

INDIRECT TRANSLATION; TRANSLATOR TRAINING; TRANSLATING FOR TRANSLATION; TRANSLATING FROM TRANSLATION; LOW-DIFFUSION LANGUAGES

1. Introduction

This article looks at the presence of indirect translation in translator training (also encompassing interpreter training), under the assumption that it will be present in contexts where the working languages are languages of low diffusion.

‘Language of low diffusion’ is taken here to include “not only vulnerable or endangered languages but also those, usually but not necessarily, small in the number of native speakers, that are rarely learned by non-native speakers” (Whyatt and Pavlović 2019, 102). For its part, ‘indirect translation’ is understood as translation (encompassing also interpreting) done via a third language (St. André 2009). It therefore includes two aspects that form two sides of the

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same coin: translating from an already translated text and translating specifically for the purpose of further translation.

Languages of low diffusion often lack global prestige and have to rely on the mediation of globally (or regionally) more powerful, widely diffused languages to disseminate their products worldwide. Differently put, in order to translate and be translated, languages of low diffusion often resort to indirect translation.² This situation is common in various translation domains (e.g., audiovisual, community, machine, specialized translation; interpreting, audio-description, localization, transediting) and seems to be here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. With this in mind, and because indirect translation creates particular challenges that require specific competences, some years ago several researchers and trainers stressed the importance of specific training in indirect translating (Gambier 2003, 63; Shlesinger 2010, 278).

However, there is still a misconception among stakeholders that indirect translation is no longer practiced, or is a deformation that can never be as good as a direct translation (Assis Rosa et al. 2017). This means that for some, indirect translation is an option to be avoided.

Against this background, it is unclear to what extent indirect translation is present in translator training. In this article, we thus want to shed some light on what the status of indirect translation in translator training at university level is and how it relates to the situation of languages of low diffusion. The article first outlines the material and method used in this exploratory research and then provides a summary of the most relevant findings to finally discuss these findings, focusing on their implications for the future of translator research-informed education, especially in the context of languages of low diffusion.

2. Material and method

Research informed by the above question combined four approaches. We first looked at mentions of indirect translation in the set of competences a translator is expected to master after completing postgraduate education; second, inclusion of subjects on indirect translation at the MA level; third, tasks to develop specific skills of indirect translation in textbooks; lastly, the hands-on daily practice of translator trainers. Details of data collection and analysis for each approach are provided below.

2.1. EMT translation competences

The first approach consisted of analysing the European Masters in Translation (EMT) competence framework, in search of competences that are (or could be) linked to indirect translation. EMT understands competence to be the “proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/ or methodological abilities,” which, once applied, would enable future

² For an overview of the most common reasons behind indirect translation see, Pięta (2019, 27-28).

translators to “perform and provide a translation service in line with the highest professional and ethical standards” (EMT 2017, 3-4).

The focus is on EMT because it is “one of the leading reference standards for translator training” (EMT 2017, 2). In this research, particular attention is paid to the EMT *competence framework* because it is considered to be the centrepiece of the EMT concept of quality in translator training.

The analysis was carried out between November 2018 and September 2019, focusing on the competence framework for 2018-2024 (which replaced the first version of the competence framework, drawn up in 2009). The current framework lists thirty-five competences, distributed through five main areas: language and culture (no break down), translation (incl. 14 competences), technology (6), personal and interpersonal (6), service provision (9). Added to this is a “Foreword,” which explains why and how the initial list of competences was revised.

2.2. EMT programs

In the second approach, the focus shifted to EMT *programs*, that is, MA university programs in translation that belong to the EMT network because they meet EMT quality standards for translator training by adopting the EMT competence framework. Particular attention was paid to the syllabi of the courses offered by these programs. (Our distinction between programs, courses and syllabi follows Pym 2011, 89). We searched for explicit and implicit references to indirect translation (e.g., translating from translation, multilingualism, relay translation...).

The focus on EMT programs and syllabi (and not just the EMT competences) was determined by the fact that: (a) the EMT model does not actually say how much of any program should be dedicated to each competence area, so “the percentages are effectively left to each particular program or national model” (Torres Simón and Pym 2019, 80) and (b) the EMT model foresees that, apart from developing the core EMT competences mentioned above, individual programs can “deliver a much wider range of competences (...) that are not included in this framework.” (EMT 2017, 4).

Data collection (April-August 2019) coincided with the latest selection round of EMT membership (in June 2019), and this is why we decided to focus on two cohorts: EMT members for 2014-2018 and for 2019-2024. This meant that we were looking at a total of 88 programs from 79 different universities in 25 countries that accepted students in the academic year 2018-2019.

Data was collected mainly from the information provided by each MA program on its official website. The information was accessed in English when possible, and in the local languages when not. In all cases, the information in English was checked against the information provided in the other languages available.

The major difficulty in data collection was related to the unexpected great diversity in the availability of information online. In most cases detailed syllabi of each course were readily

available online. However, there were also cases where only a general outline of the program was provided, without any details about the course contents. In those cases, whenever possible, program coordinators were contacted and asked for more specific information.

2.3. Published textbooks

To complete the picture, we zoomed in on major textbooks for trainers and/or self-learners in translation. With this approach we wanted to check the availability of teaching materials on how to translate from translation and/or for translation. We decided to focus only on what Maitland 2017, 220 calls ‘manuals’ (textbooks that teach translation practice through recommendations, activities and exercises designed to help learners consolidate their knowledge) published by mainstream publishers in Translation Studies in English (see Appendix 1 for the list of 28 consulted textbooks). When consulting these textbooks, we were looking for mentions of indirect translation and tasks or recommendations on how to translate for or from a translation.

2.4. Online survey

Finally, we created an online survey targeted at translator and interpreter trainers, in order to collect their opinions and experience with teaching indirect translation. In our experience, classroom activities often differ from what is outlined in the syllabus, hence the need to double-check what actually happens in the classroom. Plus, the survey allowed us to understand the position of teachers regarding indirect translation and also gave us the chance to collect views beyond the EMT network.

The survey was designed in Smart Survey (<http://app.smartsurvey.co.uk>; see Appendix 2 for the survey). It comprised fifteen questions, grouped into four broad sections: (1) respondent profile (seven questions about age, gender, mother tongue, and training experience); (2) respondent opinion about the usefulness of teaching how to translate from an already translated text and for the purpose of further translation (two questions, with predefined answers ranging from ‘counterproductive’ to a ‘must’); (3) respondent experience in teaching how to translate from an already translated text and for the purpose of further translation (six questions about where and why indirect translation is taught); (4) a box for comments. The survey was pre-tested by two respondents (translator trainers).

The survey started circulating online on 18 June 2019 and was closed on 14 July 2019. To reach the target population (translator and interpreter trainers worldwide) we approached members of associations focused on translator and interpreter training and of general translation and interpreting studies associations that hold permanent committees or organize events dedicated to translator training (via dedicated mailing lists, blogs and relevant social media), as well as staff of EMT courses (via dedicated mailing lists and/or directly by email).

Questions with predefined answers were then analyzed in terms of simple descriptive statistics. The variables were: trainers’ experience in and opinion about teaching indirect translation, the rationale behind using indirect translation in class, as well as their age, gender, mother tongue,

country, and years of teaching experience. Questions inviting free responses were examined in terms of the main arguments that could be discerned in relation to the topic in focus.

3. Results

3.1. EMT translation competences

As mentioned, EMT revised its 2009 Competence Framework in 2017 so that the programmes would comply with the rapid changes in the language industries. According to the “Foreword,” these changes deal with both technology and language dominance.

On the one hand, the text mentions the impact of technological change on translation services and how artificial intelligence, social media and a plethora of (machine) translation applications are modifying people’s expectations about translation. On the other, language inequality is referred to in the following terms: “Market needs have also evolved, with the continuing expansion of English as a lingua franca **creating new needs** that can only be met by reversing the traditional ‘mother tongue’ principle in some translation environments” (EMT 2017, 2, emphasis added). This suggests that the growth of English as an international language has resulted in new translation needs, leading to situations where translators (with native languages other than English) are expected to translate into English, most likely, at times (we might add) for further translation.

Despite the fact that two sets of changes are presented in the “Foreword” as the main justification for the need to revise the EMT Competence Framework, in the introductory note to “Translation Competences” translation technology is explicitly presented as an aim of the (new) translation competences, whereas (English-) language mediation is relegated to a mere mention between brackets (EMT 2017, 7).

In fact, the only explicit mention of indirect translation in the 2017 ETM Competences Framework can be found in the section dedicated to Translation Competences and reads as follows:

It [translation competence] should be understood in the broadest sense, encompassing not only the actual meaning transfer phase between two languages (including the use of relay languages), but also all the strategic, methodological and thematic competences that come into play before, during and following the transfer phase per se - from document analysis to final quality control procedures (EMT 2017, 7).

The quotation above suggests that, according to the EMT network, the translation act involves (only) two languages, one of which may happen to be a relay language. This, in turn, suggests that the EMT does not recognize the task of translating from already translated texts nor the role of the relayer as demanding specific competences vis-à-vis direct translation. Furthermore, the transfer phase is described as encompassing only two languages, i.e., the possibility of

resorting to previous translations which convey a source text's meaning in other languages is not considered in any of the translation phases.

As a result, of the thirty-five competences listed by EMT, ten deal with technological changes, namely, machine translation (13, 14, 18, 19), tools and applications (15, 16, 17) and social media and communication (23, 24). At the same time, none of the thirty-five competences deals explicitly with the use of relay languages and indirect translation, although competence 6 (“Translate general and domain-specific material in one or several fields from one or several source languages into their target language(s), producing a ‘fit for purpose’ translation.”) could be understood as implicitly referring to indirect translation. Seen through the lens of indirect translation, this might include the translation of multilingual material and the use of translations of one source text as support. However, what is missing from this (and remaining) competences, is a reference (explicit or otherwise) to the use of relay languages or the need for translators from low-diffusion languages to translate from their mother tongue into English.

3.2. EMT programs

In line with the previous results, no explicit mention of indirect translation was found in the available information about or syllabi of EMT programs. Again, doing a flexible reading of the syllabi, we might assume that modules with a multilingual component would include some work on indirect translation. Also, in the Translation and Interpreting Master of Arts of Newcastle University, the unit “Translating for a Big Institution. The EU – a Case Study” specifies the following objective: “Challenging the Notion of Source Text: (re)drafting, hybrid texts and interference”, which again could be seen as a reference to indirect translation. To sum up, our search for references to indirect translation in EMT syllabi was hardly fruitful, resulting in one not-so-clear indication that suggests the use of indirect translation as a means to theorize the relationship between source and target texts.

3.3. Published textbooks

Indirect translating is absent from the hands-on exercises and tasks put forward by all twenty-eight translation training textbooks and the vast majority do not mention indirect translation at all (not even in more theoretical sections). When indirect translation is mentioned — whether implicitly or explicitly — these mentions seem to fall into three distinct categories.

The first category includes two cases where, even though no explicit mention was made to “indirect translation”, the existence of this practice is implicitly and apologetically acknowledged. In other words, resort to relay languages is looked at as an inevitable evil if one wants to access products written in low-diffusion languages. This is visible in two textbooks: Baker (2018) and Díaz-Cintas and Ramael (2007).

Baker (2018) includes examples indirectly translated for pedagogical reasons. The introduction explicitly states that some translation excerpts used as examples in the textbook had been further translated into English, so that they would be accessible to English-language readers; “Back-translation, as used in this book, involves taking a text (original **or translated**) which is

written in a language with which the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar and translating it as literally as possible into English” (Baker 2018, 8, emphasis added). Back-translation (and, as previously seen, indirect translation) is considered a “necessary compromise”, “theoretically unsound” and “far from ideal”, i.e., a necessity to overcome the fact that “very few of us speak eight or nine languages” (Baker 2018, 8).

Díaz-Cintas and Ramael (2007) implicitly mention indirect translation, thus contributing to raising awareness of the importance of this practice in 21st-century audiovisual translation. Although the final glossary does not include a specific entry on indirect translation, mentions to it can be found in two definitions: “Master List: A script of a film or audiovisual programme containing subtitles of the actors’ lines in the original or a pivot language to be used by subtitler translating into other languages” (249) and “Pivot language: an intermediary language, usually English, used in the master list for the preparation of multilingual subtitles of films” (250). The use of English-language master lists is presented as a “widespread practice”, used “to translate from lesser-known languages”, prone to the perpetuation of “errors” present in the mediating text and, last but not least, as “a practice perceived by many as problematic and worrying” (37). The authors acknowledge that translation for/from translation is currently the rule rather than the exception in subtitling source texts produced in languages other than English (as local DVD industries release non-English audiovisual products with English-language master lists, cf. Díaz-Cintas and Ramael 2007, 38). However, no recommendations are made to improve master list production/translation.

The second category includes a case where indirect translation is mentioned as a training instrument in the activities, but only as a synonym of backtranslation. (González Davies 2004). Here the practice of indirect translation is one of the objectives of five proposed tasks: “Activity 18. Mistranslations”, (215), which uses back-translation to correct translation errors; “Activity 19. Backtranslation: How faithful can you be?” (123), “Task 15, Treasure Island: In search of the original manuscript” (125), which consists of using backtranslation to assess translation solutions, where students should retranslate existing translations back to the source language; “Activity 60. Accordion translation” (179), which consists of a chain of in-class translations from and back into the source language; and “Activity 65. Sorting out the message” (196), in which students are expected to recreate a source text from a deficient translation and then (properly) retranslate it. A definition of indirect translation is given in the glossary: “indirect translation: a translation carried out not from the original language in which the source text was written, but from a translation(...) (230). In short, whereas in the glossary indirect translation is defined as a translation (into a third language) of an already translated text, in the five above-mentioned tasks, indirect translation is used as backtranslation, i.e., involving (only) two languages.

The third category includes cases where indirect translation is mentioned explicitly as a recurrent practice in specific translation domains and where some discussion and/or guidelines on how to translate indirectly are provided. There are two books in this category: Lathey (2015) and Setton and Dawrant (2016).

Lathey (2015) devotes chapter 6 to “Retelling, Retranslation and Relay Translation”. This chapter raises awareness of indirect translation, presenting it as a long-standing practice in the field of children’s literature. Then, it argues that the practice of indirect translation should be improved and praises a workshop focused on translating from translation (125). Finally, clear recommendations are given to improve not only the quality of indirect translations but also the relayer’s status. According to Lathey, the indirect translator should try to reach out to the author of the original (whenever possible), while relayers should be entitled to royalties and their work protected by copyright. Under the heading “Discussion Points”, readers are invited to reflect upon the professional ethics of translating from previously translated literary works. Nonetheless, this textbook does not provide exercises on translating from/for translation.

Setton and Dawrant (2016) dedicate one section in chapter 9, “Reality and advanced tasks”, to indirect translation: “9.2.3.3. Relay interpreting: giving and taking”. The chapter covers the challenges of *lingua franca* mediation in conference interpreting as well as the specific and advanced skills relayers and relay-takers should master. The authors go on to give specific guidelines on how to successfully relay both individually and as part of a team, drawing exclusively on one source (AIIC 2004 (2017)). While they also include a section devoted to “Relay from slide presentation” (Setton and Dawrant 2016, 334), no tips are given on how to become a better relay-taker.

In conclusion, the great majority of consulted textbooks do not mention indirect translation, even in cases when the authors resort to it in the writing of the book (Baker 2018). When indirect translation is a recurrent practice, as in the case of audiovisual translation, it is mentioned but as an irretrievable effect of English as a *lingua franca*. Three textbooks dedicate a small part of a chapter to indirect translation. However, due to the lack of consensus on the definition of indirect translation (González Davies 2004), or due to their focus on only one text type (children’s literature, Lathey 2015) or one translation domain (conference interpreting: Setton and Dawrant (2016)), they do not take a broad view of translating for/from translation.

3.4. Online survey

3.4.1. Demographics

We obtained 256 usable responses. The majority of the respondents were women (71.88%; 184), which is roughly in tune with the translation profession itself, where it is estimated that the number of women is “70 percent or above” (Pym et al. 2013, 3). All respondents were over 25 years old, with the vast majority under 55 (76.95%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age, with absolute numbers in brackets (n=256).

Predefined responses	
Under 25	0.00% (0)
25-40	33.59% (86)

41-55	43.36% (111)
Over 55	23.05% (59)
Total	100% (256)

In total, the respondents identified 39 different languages as their mother tongue. As seen in Table 2, for 60.55%, the mother tongue was a globally (semi-)peripheral language, i.e., one that is mostly likely to be subject to indirect translation (Heilbron 2010). The remaining respondents had as their mother tongue more globally central languages, which are more likely to act as pivots.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by language group (n=256).

Language group	% (N° respondents)
Hyper-central (English)	16.80% (43)
Central (French, German)	11.71% (30)
Semi-central (Italian, Spanish, Russian)	10.94% (28)
(Semi-)peripheral (Other)	60.55% (155)
Total	100% (256)

Our respondents teach in 52 different countries, principally in Europe (178 respondents; 69.53%), North America (31; 12.11%) and Asia (24; 9.38%), and, to a far lesser extent, Africa (12; 4.69%), South and Central America (8; 3.16%), and Australia (3; 1.17%). As to Europe, the most represented countries were Poland (29; 11.3%), Portugal (21; 8.2%), Austria (12; 4.7%), UK (11; 4.3%) and Italy (10; 3.9%).³ With regard to teaching experience, only 19.14% (49) of our respondents had taught translation for less than five years. A vast majority can be described as having a fair share of experience as translator trainers: 44.14% (113) had been teaching for 6 to 15 years and 36.72% for over 15 years.

3.4.2. *Opinion about teaching how to translate indirectly*

We asked the trainers what they think about teaching students how to translate from a translation and what they think about teaching students how to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation. For each question, we gave the same four options (counter-productive, possible but unnecessary, useful, a must). Only one option could be selected for each question and the rating scale included four alternatives (rather than three or five) so that

³ The overrepresentation of respondents from Poland and Portugal is likely due to the fact that the authors are familiar names to translation researchers based in these countries.

the respondents would feel the need to position themselves closer to one of the extremes of the spectrum (negative versus positive perception), rather than adopting a neutral stance.

As can be seen in Table 3, the hierarchy of perceptions about teaching how to translate from translation was identical to the hierarchy of perceptions of how to translate for further translation. The variation between the numbers of mentions are marginal. A vast majority of our respondents had a positive opinion about teaching how to translate for and from translation: 73.04% consider teaching translating from translation a must or useful in translator training and roughly the same proportion (73.83%) shared this opinion about translating for translation. Extremely negative views of indirect translation in teaching were few and far between (less than 3% of responses).

Table 3. “In your opinion, teaching students how to translate from a translation is/ specifically for the purpose of further translation is:” (n=256).

Predefined responses/Question	“In your opinion, teaching students how to translate from a translation is:”	“In your opinion, teaching students how to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation is:”
counter-productive	2.73% (7)	2.34% (6)
possible but unnecessary	24.22% (62)	23.83% (61)
useful	64.84% (166)	63.67% (163)
a must	8.20% (21)	10.16% (26)
Total	100% (256)	100% (256)

3.4.3. Experience in teaching how to translate indirectly

We were also interested in knowing whether the trainers ever offer hands-on training or practice in indirect translating. Therefore we asked them if they ever teach how to translate from translation and if they ever teach how to translate for further translation. The numbers from our survey show that there is a significant discrepancy between the two approaches: while around half of our respondents reported having taught how to translate from translation, only around one-third reported having taught how to translate for translation (see Table 4).

Table 4. Use of indirect translation in class. (n=256).

Predefined responses/Question	“In your classes, do you ever ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation?”	“In your classes, do you ever ask your students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation?”
Yes	51.95% (133)	27.73% (71)
No	48.05% (123)	72.27% (185)
Total	100% (256)	100% (256)

Trainers who answered ‘yes’ to one of the questions mentioned above were further asked to specify where exactly they teach how to translate for and from translation. We provided eleven predefined options for teaching units, which can be seen in tables 5 and 6, and an open field for ‘Other’. We imposed no restrictions on the number of selected options. Our numbers show that indirect translating is most commonly included in units where general translation, specialized translation or interpreting are taught (these units occupy the first three positions in tables 5 and 6). However, the frequency with which indirect translation is taught in these courses varies: translating from translation is most frequently practiced in general translation workshops (Table 5) whereas translating for further translation is most frequent in interpreting practicums (Table 6).

Table 5. “Please specify in which teaching unit you ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation.” (n=256).

Predefined responses	% (N° mentions)
General translation	43.61 % (58)
Specialized translation (medical, technical, etc.)	33.08% (44)
Interpreting	28,57 (38)
Methods and approaches in Translation Studies	21.05% (28)
Literary translation	20.30% (27)
Translation theory and/or history	12.03% (16)
Audiovisual translation	9.02% (12)
Multilingual translation workshop	6.77% (9)
Computer-assisted translation	5.26% (7)
Localisation project management	4.51% (6)
Other (Provided specifications: Writing classes, Reviews [sic])	3,01% (4)

Table 6. “Please specify in which teaching unit you ask students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation” (n=256).

Predefined responses	
Interpreting	40.00% (28)
General translation	32.86% (23)
Specialized translation (medical, technical, etc.)	30.00% (21)
Literary translation	18.57% (13)
Methods and approaches in Translation Studies	15.71% (11)

Audiovisual translation	14.29% (10)
Translation theory and/or history	10.00% (7)
Computer-assisted translation	8.57% (6)
Multilingual translation workshop	8.57% (6)
Localisation project management	2.86% (2)
Other (Writing classes):	1.44% (1)

3.4.4. Correlation between opinions about and experience in teaching how to translate indirectly.

We also wanted to find out to what extent trainers' views about teaching indirect translation is linked to their experience. Trainers who answered 'yes' when asked if they ever teach translating for translation in their classes have largely positive attitudes toward it: 76.06% (54) classified it as useful and 21.13% (15) as a must; only 3.8% (2 respondents) found the experience counterproductive. Similarly, the vast majority of trainers who answered 'yes' when asked if they ever teach translating from translation in their classes had a positive perception of it: 81.20% (133) classified it as useful and 9.77% (13) as a must; only 8.27% (11) said it's possible but unnecessary and 0.75% (1) deemed it counterproductive. Overall, the overwhelming majority of surveyed trainers who use indirect translation in class consider it helpful or even essential for translator education.

3.4.5. Reasons for teaching how to translate indirectly.

We were interested in why our respondents teach how to do indirect translation. For this, we first asked them to specify why they teach how to translate from translation, and then why they teach how to translate for translation. For each question, we provided the same four predefined options, which are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. "Please specify why you ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation./to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation". (n=132; n=71).

Predefined responses/Question	"Please specify why you ask your students to translate from a text which is itself a translation."	"Please specify why you ask your students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation"
Because I want my students to rehearse real-life situations	66.67% (88)	67.61% (48)
Because it requires a specific set of competences	37.88% (50)	46.48% (33)

Because it helps me maximize linguistic diversity in class	28.03% (37)	38.03% (27)
None of the above	18.18% (24)	7.04% (5)
Total	(199)	(113)

We imposed no restrictions on the number of options that could be selected for each question by a single respondent. The two questions were respectively answered by 132 and 71 respondents, who collectively provided 312 replies. As can be seen in table 7, the hierarchy of reasons behind teaching how to translate from translation is not different from the hierarchy of reasons behind teaching how to translate for translation. For both questions, the most frequent motivation (mentioned by 66.67% and 67.61% respondents to the first question and second question, respectively) was the willingness to have students practice authentic translation scenarios. This was followed by the justification that indirect translation requires additional competences that need to be developed (46.48% and 37.88%). The third most frequently selected reason (mentioned by 28.03% and 38.03%) was that indirect translation is useful in making the most of the broad range of languages known by the students in the class. The “none of the above” option was the least frequent one, chosen by 18.18% respondents to the first question and 7.04% to the second question. Some of the trainers provided a total of twenty-one additional justifications (in a box for comments), which mostly boil down to four arguments that are summarized below. The argument types are listed in the decreasing number of mentions and accompanied by a representative statement.

Skills developed when translating for or from translations can be relevant to translating in general (8 mentions)

“It [relay interpreting] also consists of sub-skills useful to interpreting as a whole.”

Translating for and from translation helps increase student awareness of the intricate nature of the translation process (6 mentions)

“Translated texts are a good source of decisions and choices, which help students to improve their analytical skills and their ability to understand the intrinsic complexity of translation as an activity.”

Translating for and from translation helps diversify classroom activities. (4 mentions)

“[Relay interpreting] diversifies class tasks”

Chance (3 mentions)

“In my case indirect translation in teaching is kind of incidental rather than on purpose.”

The examination of comments also showed that some trainers teach *about* indirect translation but do not teach *how* to translate indirectly. The arguments justifying the rationale behind raising student awareness have to do with two aspects, which received an equal number of mentions, and are given below.

Indirect translation helps theorize the relationship between source and target texts (6 mentions)

“[I use] indirect translation for the sake of translation conceptualization, [...] trying to make students aware of the relativity of source and target.”

Indirect translation is common in the translation domain I teach about (6 mentions)

“The practice of using a pivot language is common in AVT. In classes, I explain this practice, but it's not something that I have students do.”

3.4.5. Reasons for not teaching how to translate indirectly

Although we did not include this question in our survey, from the respondents' comments we can also identify possible reasons why our respondents do not teach how to translate for or from translation. The thirty-six comments addressing these reasons fall into five categories that are provided below, in decreasing order of frequency, along with representative statements.

Hardly any indirect translation in my local market, in my field and/or in my language pair. (10)

“The use of indirect translation teaching depends (also) on the language pair. English is often used as a pivot language so for those teaching translation into English this exercise can be useful. However, I teach Italian into Dutch”

Poor quality of indirect translation (8 mentions)

“as relay translation often hides errors [sic] in the relay language (e.g. in subtitling), students and professionals should (be able to) translate directly from SL to TL [source language to target language].”

Institutional constraints (Time or subject limitations) (6 mentions)

“I have so little time with the students in the computer-lab, I can only teach them the most basic things”

Ignorance (5 mentions)

“I've never thought about this before, but will now consider it.”

Ethical issues (4 mentions)

“It's a challenging dynamic... teaching them [how to translate from translation] informs them [students] to take translation work when it takes away the work from native users who are already marginalized because of their disability and language they use (sign).”

Because translating from translation is not different from translating the original (3 mentions)

“If the source text is a well-formed text, then it wouldn't matter if it were a translation itself.”

3.4.3. Correlation between demographics and the opinion on indirect translation

We also wanted to check how the demographics of surveyed trainers correlated with their opinion about teaching how to translate indirectly. We did not find any clear and meaningful correlation between trainers' opinion and gender, country of teaching, level of teaching (undergraduate versus graduate), teaching domain or years of teaching practice. However, we did manage to discern trends related to the respondents' age and mother tongue.

Table 8. “In your opinion, teaching students how to translate from a translation /for the purpose of further translation is:” Mentions by age (n=256)

Opinion/Age	25-40		41-55		over 55	
	Translating from translation	Translating for translation	Translating from translation	Translating for translation	Translating from translation	Translating for translation
Counter-productive	3.49% (3)	3.49% (3)	0.00% (0)	0.90% (1)	6.78% (4)	3.39% (2)
Possible but unnecessary	16.28% (14)	13.95% (12)	27.03% (30)	26.13% (29)	30.51% (18)	33.90% (20)
useful	69.77% (60)	69.77% (60)	66.67% (74)	63.96% (71)	54.24% (32)	54.24% (32)
must	10.46% (9)	12.79% (11)	6.31% (7)	9.01% (10)	8.47% (5)	8.47% (5)
Total	100% (86)	100% (86)	100% (111)	100% (111)	100% (59)	100% (59)

Our results (in Table 8) suggest that the bias against using indirect translation in the classroom increases with seniority: in the group of respondents over age 55, teaching how to translate indirectly is deemed “counter-productive” and “possible but unnecessary” more frequently than in the group aged 25-40. In other words, younger trainers have a more positive perception of using indirect translation in classroom activities. The fact that free responses mentioning the poor quality of indirect translations came mostly from trainers over age 55 (7 out of 8) also seems to point in this direction.

Table 9. “In your opinion, teaching students how to translate from a translation is/ specifically for the purpose of further translation is:” Mentions by mother tongue (n=256).

Opinion	Native speakers of wide-diffusion languages	Native speakers of low-diffusion languages	Total
Counter-productive	4.11% (3)	1.64% (3)	6
Possible but unnecessary	30.14% (22)	21.31% (39)	61

Useful	49.36% (36)	68.40% (127)	163
Must	16.44% (12)	7.65% (14)	26
Total	100% (73)	100% (183)	256

Regarding the correlation with language, our numbers suggest that speakers whose mother tongue is a wide-diffusion language (English, French and German) have overall less favourable opinions about translating for translation than native speakers of low-diffusion languages. As can be seen in Table 9, negative views about translating for translation (linked to the ‘counter-productive’ and ‘possible but unnecessary’ options) are cumulatively expressed by 34.25% of speakers with major mother tongues. Among the speakers of low-diffusion languages, these negative opinions are expressed by 22.95%. This is problematic. Translating for translation typically consists of translating into a widely used language (such as English, French and German). The widespread assumption seems to be that teachers’ ‘natural’ direction is translating into their native language (Hagemann 2019, 86). If native speakers of widely used languages are against training their students how to translate for the purpose of further translation — so how to facilitate the work of the second translator, who translates into a low-diffusion language — than this is likely to have a negative impact on the quality of indirect translations.

3.4.4. Correlation between demographics and use of indirect translation in class

To complete the picture, we also wanted to verify to what extent the demographics of surveyed trainers correlates with their use of indirect translation in class. We managed to pinpoint patterns related to the respondents’ mother tongue, but we were not successful in identifying correlations between the use of indirect translation and other variables mentioned in the previous section.

Table 10. Use of indirect translation in class (translating from translation). Mentions by mother tongue (n=256).

“In your classes, do you ever ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation?”	Wide-diffusion languages	Low-diffusion languages	Total
Yes	41.10% (30)	56.28% (103)	133
No	58.90% (43)	43.72% (80)	123
Total	100% (73)	100% (183)	256

With respect to the correlation between the use of indirect translation in class and the trainers’ mother tongue, our numbers (Tables 10 and 11) suggest that native speakers of low-diffusion languages teach how to translate indirectly more often than speakers of major languages. This pattern is verifiable both with regards to the option of ‘translating from’ and the option of

‘translating for’. Indeed, translating from translation is taught by 56.28% of peripheral-language speakers and only 41.10% of major-language speakers. In the same vein, translating for translation is used by 31.69% of peripheral-language speakers and only by 17.81% of major-language speakers.

Table 11. Use of indirect translation in class (translating for translation). Mentions by mother tongue (n=256).

“In your classes, do you ever ask your students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation?”	Wide-diffusion languages	Low-diffusion languages	Total
Yes	17.81% (13)	31.69% (58)	71
No	82.19% (60)	68.31% (125)	185
Total	100% (73)	100% (183)	256

4. Discussion

Results suggest that indirect translation is overlooked at the institutional level (in the list of EMT competences, in the official EMT syllabi and in published textbooks) but still reaches future translators via in-class tasks developed by a significant part of surveyed trainers. Most positive views on teaching how to translate indirectly come from younger trainers who are native speakers of low-diffusion languages.

Trainers’ comments might point towards clues as to why indirect translation is ignored at the institutional level. Based on those comments, we argue that (1) there is a disassociation between professional practice and the development of translation curricula; (2) the academic vision of indirect translation is based on negative and outdated research; (3) indirect translation raises ethical considerations that trainers may wish to avoid; and (4) mainstream research often forgets about the needs of low-diffusion languages, where indirect translation is a useful resource.

As evident in the survey results, there is a certain agreement among trainers that indirect translation is part of the translation industry, especially in some fields (like subtitling and conference interpreting) and for some language combinations (mostly languages of low diffusion). However, industry practices do not necessarily inform the development of curriculum practices. After all, Gambier (2003) and Shlesinger (2010) had already called for specific training in indirect translation to be developed on the basis of professional practice, but to little avail. Despite claims that support the link between curriculum design and the translation industry, there is little evidence to support a straightforward connection between professional needs and curriculum design (as argued about the inclusion of Machine Translation in the curriculum by Gaspari et al 2015, 333). So, in the end, the burden to

incorporate these practices in the classroom falls on the shoulders of the trainers. In contexts where indirect translation is more visible, trainers are more likely to have experienced it and therefore to be able and willing to teach it. In other situations, trainers might not be prepared to develop their own activities or may just prioritize other topics.

Moreover, comments about why some trainers avoid using indirect translation in class reinforce a vision of it being inaccurate and of lower quality than direct translation – an aspect that is also mentioned in the textbooks analysed. Additionally, research often has a historical approach perpetuating the myth that indirect translation does not happen. We could argue that high profile authoritarian voices in Translation Studies aim to present an ideal version of translation, fitting UNESCO's (1976) recommendations on the legal protection of translators or Lander's (2001) discouraging remarks in his practical guide for literary translators. Those recommendations may arise from the opinion that if something is lost in translation, twice as much is lost in indirect translation, in turn arising from research carried out from the perspective of finding and criticizing errors (Pięta 2019, 28). In this context, comments on the usefulness of indirect translation in the classroom to direct attention towards illustrating the borders of translation and debunking myths of pure/perfect equivalence are relevant.

UNESCO's (1976) recommendations bring up another issue that might complicate the inclusion of indirect translation, namely ethical considerations. Taivalkoski-Shilov (2019), in her review of ethical considerations regarding the quality of machine-assisted translation of literary texts, distinguishes translation as a product, as a process and as an industry. Indirect translation can be challenged on all three grounds: without well-founded research on the quality of indirect translation, one might assume that the results are not acceptable. Similarly, one can hardly expect translators to improve the process without sufficient research on the topic and little or no training. Incidentally, the institutional stigmatization of indirect translation probably hinders systematic training and underpinning research on this practice. Moreover, indirect translation is usually hidden (Marin-Lacarta 2017), very often implying that the translator of the mediated text was never adequately compensated in terms of author rights. Lastly, using a previous translation might raise issues of collegiality, solidarity, respect for Otherness and the role of mediators (some of the key issues comprised in a general ethics of translation in Chesterman 2001, 143).

These views may explain the lack of institutional visibility of indirect translation. However, most of the voices calling for direct translation as the only practice seem to forget that indirect translation is the most-readily available option for languages of limited diffusion: it is cost-effective, helps manage risks and provides control over the source text. It is to the benefit of languages of limited diffusion that indirect translation is incorporated in the classroom (as shown in the profile of the trainers), and while certain awareness of the pivotal role of central languages are suggested by those who translate for translation, calls for full inclusion of indirect translation training in the relevant fields might be for scholars working with low-diffusion languages to make.

5. Conclusion

This exploratory research was carried out with the aim of shedding some light on the situation of indirect translation in training, especially in relation to languages of low diffusion and fields of practice. The study presents some limitations in scope (after all, the EMT is only one of the possible models; countries/languages are not equally represented in the survey and the examination of textbooks covers only some publications in English) but still provides paths for reflection and future research.

Indirect Translation is a multi-layered practice in constant evolution. It has the potential to challenge conventional binary thinking about translation and add a new approach to the role of central languages as gatekeepers. However, the lack of institutional legitimization displaces indirect translation to the margins of translator training despite its currency.

We end by calling for the institutional legitimization of indirect translation as a valid translation strategy in contexts involving less-diffused languages, so that ample research-based training advice on how to efficiently translate via a third language can be systematically developed and fully incorporated in translator training.

We thus hope the coming years will see more research on present-day instances of indirect translation, a new revision of competences to include specific skills related to indirect translation (if research shows these are indeed necessary), and the inclusion of such competences in syllabi and textbooks.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. List of consulted textbooks

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Appendix 2. Survey structure

Section 1. About this survey

Dear colleagues,

This survey is targeted at translator and interpreter trainers and takes around 5 minutes to complete. The purpose of this study is to check if and how indirect translation (translation of translation) is incorporated into translator and interpreter training. All answers are anonymous and confidential. The survey will close on 14 July 2019.

Preliminary results will be announced at the next EST2019 Congress ([Panel on Indirect Translation](#)) to be held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, on 9-13 September 2019.

The research is conducted by:

- Dr [Hanna Pieta](#) (Universidade de Lisboa)
- Dr [Rita Bueno Maia](#) (Universidade Católica Portuguesa)
- Dr [Catarina Xavier](#) (Universidade de Lisboa)
- Dr Ester Torres-Simón (Universitat Rovira i Virgili)

Section 2. About you

1. *How old are you?* *

- under 25
- between 25 and 40
- between 41 and 55
- more than 55

2. *What is your gender?* *

- Male
- Female
- I'd rather not disclose

3. *What is your mother tongue?* *

Please choose here (language)

Section 3. About your training experience

4. *In which country do you currently teach translation and/or interpreting?* *

Please choose here (country)

5. *For how long have you been teaching translation and/or interpreting? **

- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 15 years
- more than 15 years

6. *At what level do you teach translation and/or interpreting?*

- BA
- MA
- PhD

7. *Which unit(s) do you teach?*

-
- Interpreting
- Translation theory and/or history
- Methods and approaches in Translation Studies
- Audiovisual translation
- Literary translation
- Computer-assisted translation
- Localisation project management
- Specialized translation (medical, technical, etc.)
- General translation
- Multilingual translation workshop
- Other (please specify):

Section 4. Your opinion about teaching indirect translation

8. *In your opinion, teaching students how to translate from a translation is: **

-
- counter-productive
- possible but unnecessary
- useful
- a must

9. *In your opinion, teaching students how to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation is: **

- counter-productive
- possible but unnecessary
- useful
- a must

Section 5. Your experience in teaching how to translate from translation

10. *In your classes, do you ever ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation? **

- Yes
- No

[Available only to respondents who answered 'yes' in previous question] Section 6. Your experience in teaching how to translate from translation

11. *Please specify in which teaching unit you ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation:*

-

- Interpreting
 - Translation theory and/or history
- Methods and approaches in Translation Studies
- Audiovisual translation
 - Literary translation
 - Computer-assisted translation
 - Localisation project management
- Specialized translation (medical, technical, etc.)
- General translation
 - Multilingual translation workshop
 - Other (please specify):

12. *Please specify why you ask students to translate from a text which is itself a translation:*

- Because translating from translated texts requires a specific set of competences
- Because translating from translated texts helps me maximize linguistic diversity in class
- Because I want my students to rehearse real-life situations
- None of the above

Section 7. Your experience in teaching how to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation

13. *In your classes, do you ever ask your students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation? **

- Yes
- No

[Available only to respondents who answered 'yes' in previous question] Section 8. Your experience in teaching how to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation

14. *Please specify in which teaching unit you ask students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation:*

- Interpreting
 - Translation theory and/or history
- Methods and approaches in Translation Studies
- Audiovisual translation
 - Literary translation
 - Computer-assisted translation
 - Localisation project management
- Specialized translation (medical, technical, etc.)
- General translation
 - Multilingual translation workshop
 - Other (please specify):

15. *Please specify why you ask your students to translate specifically for the purpose of further translation:*

- Because translating for further translation requires a specific set of competences
- Because translating for further translation helps me maximize linguistic diversity in class
- Because I want my students to rehearse real-life situations

None of the above

Section 9. Comments and questions are most welcome!

If you have any questions or comments, please provide them in the box below.