

Testing indirect translation with novice translators

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Systematic research on indirect translation (ITr) is still scarce, leaving several related questions unanswered. This experiment tackles two such questions: First, what are the students' expectations towards ITr? Second, in situations where they have access to a previous translation in another language, do translators adopt solutions from that mediating text, and if so, why? Do they consider support translation to be a sort of ITr?

A class of 36 novice translators were instructed to translate an English literary text into Spanish, but some were given access to a previously published Catalan translation of the text, a language they spoke. The class was thus divided into three groups: group A had access to the ST in English only; group B had access to the English ST and its published Catalan translation; group C started working on the English ST and received access to the Catalan version only after they had produced a full preliminary draft in Spanish. The final translations were compared to find regularities in solutions to key translation problems. Also, students had to report on the translation process and provide their opinion on the convenience, problems and ethics of using a mediating text.

Qualitative analysis of the results shows a tendency to accept indirect translation as a valid possibility within the translation process insofar as the translator discloses what the source text is. Also, there is a tendency to reluctantly use solutions closer to the mediating text (in Catalan) than to the source text (English).

Beyond these results, methodological and educational gains can be obtained from the study. From a methodological point of view, the task showed the difficulty of isolating linguistic patterns of indirectness involving cognate languages; from a pedagogical perspective, the task encouraged students to discuss key topics in translation like plagiarism, data management, literal translation, and building professional self-confidence.