

What is direct translation, anyway? Deconstructing direct translation, foregrounding indirect translation

Hanna Pieta

University of Lisbon

The starting point for this paper are three observations that result from my ongoing research: (i) translation research uses the concept of direct translation without reflection and considers it as self-evident, unambiguous and carved in stone (this is also the case in studies dedicated to indirect translation, here understood as a translation of a translation, cf. Gambier 1994); (ii) this uncritical approach to direct translation has left it largely undertheorized and akin to a mythical beast marked by purity and simplicity; (iii) such a sacralization of direct translation has impoverished the way translation researchers and trainers view indirect translation. Against this background, the paper will argue that only by conceptualizing and deconstructing the notion of direct translation can we fully desacralize it and, importantly for the purpose of this EST 2019 panel (Topic “Living the dream”), bring indirect translation to the forefront of Translation Studies.

First, the paper will briefly survey the way the term direct translation is used in mainstream Translation Studies dictionaries, overviews, handbooks and encyclopedias, as well as in published research dedicated to indirect translation (listed in Pięta 2017). The paper will then illustrate an approach that deconstructs and debunks the concept of direct translation by tracing the genealogy of several translations that previous research classifies as direct but – the paper will argue – defy such classification as they result from different types of indirectness specified in Assis Rosa et al (2017, 121). The said translations are based on different text types (incl. literary, news and scientific translation) and language combinations (incl. Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, French and English). The paper will end with a consideration of what is at stake in debunking the notion of direct translation, both for Translation Studies in general and for indirect translation research in particular.

References

- Assis Rosa, Alexandra, Hanna Pięta, and Rita Bueno Maia (eds). 2017. “Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues Regarding Indirect Translation: An Overview.” *Translation Studies* 10 (2): 113–132.
- Gambier, Yves. 1994. “La retraduction, retour et détour.” *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* 39 (3): 413–417.
- Pięta, Hanna. 2017. “Theoretical, methodological and terminological issues in researching indirect translation: A critical annotated bibliography.” *Translation Studies* 10 (2): 186–216.