

## Exploring indirect translation: Ukrainian literature as test case

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**Abstract.** Indirect translation is one of scarcely studied topics in translation studies due to a variety of reasons. One of them is the difficulty of establishing the full textual base since the fact of a translation being an indirect one is very often concealed by the publishers. That is precisely the case of some Ukrainian literary works that were translated via the third language. The aim of the given article is to consider the implications of indirect translations of canonical Ukrainian literary works as well as to bring attention to the issue of indirect translation in general.

**Keywords:** *indirect translation, retranslation, intermediary text, textual base, relay translation.*

Indirect translation has been a rare subject research in the field of translation studies. It's an enigmatic phenomenon by its very nature – indirectness – that leads to deception or hidden roots. It's very hard to detect a complete textual base (the source text, the mediating translation, the target text etc.) since the participants of the entire process of indirect translation (publishers, translators etc.) tend to conceal its “indirect” nature. Indirect translation is usually presented as a direct one and due to this fact a vast majority of examples of indirect translations remain unknown. The concealment of indirect translation is partly connected to the legal aspect of translation (UNESCO Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators) and some other motives that will be discussed further in this paper. Therefore, we consider undertaking a number of studies aimed at detection of the indirect translations (for their improvement or elimination/ retranslation) to be of utmost importance. The **goal** of this article is to consider indirect translations of Ukrainian literary works in terms of their possible implications for the international image of Ukraine and its culture. The given article also aims at bringing attention to the issue of translation through the third language as an unjustified practice in the context of translation from less spread or “minor” languages. **Methods** of comparative translation analysis, contextual analysis and hermeneutics were used in order to achieve the goal of the article.

The phenomenon of translation through the mediating language is undesirable from the mere theoretical standpoint. Thus, indirect translation appears to be something “illegal” and is scarcely covered in translation studies. In the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* there is an entry for *indirect translation* [15, p. 708], Pieta and Assis Rosa state that it “remains one of the most understudied phenomena in translation studies today” [19]. They offer to use the term *indirect translation*. Ringmar, a Lund university researcher and probably one of the most prolific researchers of the translation through the third language, also uses the same term. To illustrate the unsettled metalanguage on the topic of indirect translation Ringmar provides a table of hits of different terms used by such translation theorists as Toury and Kittel referring to indirect translation [21, p. 2]. The data has been taken from the “Translation Studies Bibliography” by an independent Dutch publishing house “John Benjamins” as of November 2006. The term

*indirect translation* has the edge in usage over other options such as *rettranslation* (which proves to be confusing due to its vast usage in the meaning of “new translations”) and *relay translation* (which is used in interpreting where the mediating translation/ text has no audience – a rare thing in terms of literary translations). That's precisely the term employed by Spirk in his latest book on the reception of Czech literature in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Portugal [22] which can be considered as a potentially positive dynamics indicator for the number of researches on indirect translation. Spirks considers *indirect translations* to be “an exacerbated form of “what gets lost in translation” [22, p.144]. In his book he also talks about indirect translations as a form of colonization etc.

In Soviet times the most common mediating language for translations of Ukrainian literary texts was Russian. Gambier states that “Russian was thus, effectively, a relay language and the language of censorship” [13, p. 59]. Zaborov, on the contrary, argues that a common practice of indirect translations through Russian as a mediating language was a real chance for “national literatures” to be given publicity abroad [25, p. 2072]. Thus, for instance, in 1958 Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House published a play “Ukradene schastyia” (“Stolen happiness”, 1894) by a renown Ukrainian writer Ivan Franko translated into Spanish (“La felicidad robada”, tr. by J. Lopez Ganivet). It is stated in the publication that the play was translated from Russian. That is also the case with the English translation (tr. by F.Solasko, 1957) of Ivan Franko's narrative “Boa Constrictor” (1878), which was published by the same publishing house. Ringmar states that “indirect translations may be used as a means to control the contents of the translated text, e.g. for political or religious reasons [...] this aspect is likely to have played a role in the frequent use of Russian as a mediating language in the former Soviet Union” [21, p.7]. During the period of 1950-1980s the publication of English translations of the Ukrainian literary prose was mostly undertaken by Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House, which partly explains the fact of indirect translations through already existing direct Russian ones.

However, the ideological factor is not the only cause of indirect translation. The status of a language is another contributing factor. Orthofer states that “less widely spoken languages (the Scandinavian ones, for example) might be subject to the second hand route” [15, p. 8] and emphasizes that the most common example of indirect translations taking place is Eastern European literature.

Thus, in terms of translated Ukrainian literature the second most common mediating language (for potential indirect translations) is English. Therefore, Ukrainian literary texts are first translated into English as *lingua franca* and then from English into other Western European languages. Bellos calls this practice *translation UP* (as opposed to *translation DOWN*), which stands for “translation towards a language of a greater prestige than the source/ towards a language with a larger readership” [4, p. 172]. It is instructive to recall that such practice is concealed, as was mentioned above, meaning that usually on the publication of such a translation there is no indication of the language the translation was done from. That was the case with the German translation of the novel “Tyhrolovy” (“The Tiger Hunters”, 1943) by Ukrainian writer Ivan Bahriany. It was published by the Cologne publishing house “Styria” in 1963 under the title “Das Gesetz der Taiga” (“The Law of Taiga”). The translator is Margreth von Kees. The translation contains no indication of its being done from the original in Ukrainian. Only in Bahriany’s personal correspondence I encountered information that translations into German, Italian, French and some other Western European languages were done from the English translation of the novel (“The Hunters and the Hunted”, 1954).

Hence the main factors of indirect translation are ideological (political), the source language circulation factor and the factor of prestige of the mediating language. This list is undoubtedly not exhaustive but it represents the most common causes of indirect translation in general and of Ukrainian literature in particular.

**Implications of indirect translation.** Taking into consideration the above-mentioned “enigmatic” nature of indirect translation the main challenge in studying this phenomenon lies in its *detection*. Actually Spirk finds it, namely “the difficulty to establish the corresponding textual base” [22, p.143], to be the reason for such a scarce research on indirect translation. Indeed, even if the fact of indirect translation is not concealed (for instance, the publication of the Spanish indirect translation of “Stolen Happiness” by Franko contains indication of it being translated from Russian rather than from the original Ukrainian text), in order to study the correlation between the target text and the original text, an intermediary chain – a mediating translation – has to be established, and that proves to be immensely difficult, sometimes even impossible. Very often publishing houses conceal the fact of translation through the intermediary text due to some ideological intentions since the indication “translated from Russian/ translated from English etc.” may prompt a foreign reader to thinking that the original is in Russian or in English. In terms of Franko’s play there are three Russian translations of it (1947, 1950, 1956) and each one of them could have served as a mediating text for Spanish translation (1958). The following examples illustrate the text’s capacity to expose publisher’s secret of that kind:

(1) Голос за вікном. Гей, люди, отворіть, не дайте **душi** загинути!

Анна. Хтось, певно, з дороги збився. Біжу отворити.

**Микола.** Анно, стій! Може, яка **зла душа**?

Анна. Ба, та що? Дати чоловікові загинати? Та й що нам **зла душа**? [12, p.17]

(2) Голос за окном. Эй, люди отворите, не дайте **человеку** погибнуть!

Анна. Верно, кто-то с дороги сбился. Побегу открыть.

**Николай.** Анна, погоди! Может **человек-то** **лихой**.

Анна. Смотрите-ка, что ж, по-твоему, дать ему погибнуть? Что нам **злой человек**? [10, p.37-38]

(3) Голос за окном. Эй, люди, отворите, не дайте **душе** погибнуть!

Анна. Кто-то видно с дороги сбился. Пойду открыть.

**Микола.** Стой, Анна! А вдруг **злой какой** **человек**?

Анна. Так что ж, погибать ему? Да и что **нам** **злой человек**? [8, p. 654]

(4) Голос за окном. Эй, люди добрые, отворите, не дайте **живой душе** погибнуть!

Анна. Верно, кто-то сбился с дороги. Побегу открою.

**Микола.** Постой, Анна! А вдруг это какой **злодей**?

Анна. Так что же, дать человеку погибнуть? Да и что нам **злодей**? [11, p.19]

(5) Una voz detrás de la ventana. ¡Eh, buena gente, abrid! ¡No dejes perecer a **un alma humana**!

Anna. Seguramente será alguno que se ha extraviado por el camino. Voy corriendo a abrir.

**Mikola.** ¡Espera, Anna! ¿Y si de pronto es algún **forajido**?

Anna. ¿Entonces, qué, vamos a dejar morir a una persona? ¿Y qué puede hacernos a nosotros un **forajido**? [9, p.24]

In the Spanish translation the name of the main hero (**Микола**) was transliterated (**Mikola**). Thus, the mediating role of the 1947 Russian translation by Shipov (example 2) is doubtful since the name of the main hero is translated into Russian (**Николай**). The epithet “**зла душа**” (evil soul) is lost in both Spanish (example 5) and the 1956 Russian translation by Dejch (example 4). It is replaced by a noun “**forajido**”, which can be translated as “outlaw” and corresponds to Russian “**злодей**” in example 4. In the other two Russian translations (examples 2, 3) the original epithet is rendered as “**лихой/ злой человек**” (“evil/malicious person”) and “**злой человек**” (“malicious person”). These are just a few out of many more examples that confirm lexical and stylistic correspondence between the 1956 Russian and 1958 Spanish translations of “Stolen Happiness”. Thus, apart from establishing the mediating Russian text that served as a source text for the indirect Spanish translation of the play by Franko, I also observed that losses or changes in the intermediary translation are inevitably replicated in the indirect translation. In that case, it stands to reason that merits of the intermediary translation assist the high quality of indirect translation. However, is logic or lanarity (source text→ translation in the mediating language ↔ indirect translation) relevant when it comes to translation? Is the relation between the original and indirect translation lost or can be scarcely seen through the correlation with the intermediary translation? Answers

to these questions can be illustrated by the following examples from the direct English and indirect German translations of Bahriany's novel "Tyhrolovy":

(6) **Навзаводи зі смертю** [3, p.38].

**The Duel with Death** [2, p.47].

**Zweikampf mit dem Tod** [1, p.39]

(7) І над річкою он цвітуть черемхи, видивляються в бистру воду, слухають, як булькає вода по камінцях [3, p.65]

The shore of the brook was lined with blooming cherries which seemed to be peering into the swift water and listening to it babble over the stones [2, p.83]

Die Ufer des Baches wurden von blühendes Traubenkirchen gesäumt, die sich im rasch dahinplätschernden Wasser vergeblich zu spiegeln suchten [1, p.74]

The example 6 represents the title of the third part of the novel's first chapter as well as a metaphor. "Навзаводи" means "for dear life, at full throat, race etc". And during the whole part the protagonist indeed runs for a dear life, he runs through impenetrable jungle, tormented by hunger and thirst, as if competing with the death. The English and German translation ("The Duel with Death", "Zweikampf mit dem Tod") renders the implied meaning of *power* and *struggle* but ignores the sense of *movement* (race). That is a considerable loss since the whole spirit/ idea of the novel lies in the belief that there's always a future and that one should never stop, never give up and always move on, despite all the obstacles. The novel's protagonist Hryhoriy Mnohohrishnyi kept doing that (not giving up) because "fortune favours the bold". The suggested alternative rendering of the title, that would cover the implied meaning of running for life, could be **Race the Death** (as *race the wind*) in the English translation and **Um die Wette mit dem Tod** in its German counterpart.

The personification of cherries in the example 7 (черемхи, видивляються в бистру воду, слухають, як булькає вода по камінцях) is rendered in both direct English and indirect German translations with some

deviations in the latter. Let's compare the English translation of the given personification (**cherries which seemed to be peering into the swift water and listening to it babble over the stones**), which differs from the original only by insertion of **which seemed**, to its German counterpart (**Traubenkirchen, die sich im rasch dahinplätschernden Wasser vergeblich zu spiegeln suchten** – cherries that were vainly trying to find their reflection in the swift water). The personification in the German translation is shorter (there's no mentioning of **cherries listening to the water babble over the stones**) but at the same time it's endowed with additional metaphorical meaning (why they were peering into water? They were looking for **their reflection**) which makes them even more similar to young girls. Therefore, sometimes the shortcomings of the indirect German translation, caused by its distance from the original Ukrainian text, are compensated, enriching the translation with the surprising and so author-like (e.g. Bahriany's love for personification of nature etc.) poetic imagery.

Thus, indirect translation is not always dependent on its source – the intermediary translation. That causes both negative and positive correlation between indirect translation and the rendering of stylistic peculiarities of the original. Unfortunately, indirect translation far more often adds to the losses of the first (direct) translation than compensates them.

The given paper emphasizes and defines the difficulties of the literary translation in terms of indirect translation, singles out the causes and the implications of this phenomenon. The phenomenon of indirect translation, the indirect translation of Ukrainian literature into other European languages in particular, needs further investigation, aimed at detection of indirect translation "incidents", their reworking or retranslation (in the direct mode) if need be as well as prevention of the potential indirect translations. Although, fortunately, in many cases the ideological factor lost its topicality, the factors of source language circulation and prestige (of mediating language) are still viable and worth working on.

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### **Исследование непрямого перевода на примере украинской литературы**

**Б. О. Плющ**

**Аннотация.** Непрямой перевод остается малоисследованной темой в теории перевода в силу множества причин. Сложность восстановления полной текстовой базы является одной из них. Она обусловлена тем, что издательства очень часто скрывают факт непрямого перевода. Именно так обстоят дела с некоторыми произведениями украинской художественной литературы, перевод которых был осуществлен через третий язык. Целью этой статьи является рассмотрение последствий непрямого перевода канонических произведений украинской литературы и привлечение внимания к проблеме непрямого перевода в целом.

**Ключевые слова:** *непрямой перевод, новый перевод, текст-посредник, текстовая база, реле-перевод.*