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Indirect Translation: A Semiotic Perspective

Abstract: Grounded on the historical development of indirect translation mainly in China, a critical analysis of the definitions previously given for indirect translation has been made in terms of its nature, features, referential range, and classification, as well as the sign typology involved hereby. This results in a new definition of indirect translation as a process and as an end product respectively, highlighting its referential range, including relay translation, (tech- or human-based) mediated translation, adaptation, and free translation. The definition further divides it into seven types of operational mechanism (conventional single-sourced indirect translation, conventional double-sourced indirect translation, single-sourced relay translation, multi-sourced relay translation, interpreter-based relay translation, indirect translation in reverse translation, single-sourced multi-layered relay translation) and seven types of indirect sign transformation, namely: (1) T→T indirect translation; (2) T→I indirect translation; (3) I→T indirect translation; (4) T+I→T indirect translation; (5) T+I→I indirect translation; (6) T→T+I indirect translation; and (7) I→T+I indirect translation. Finally, the operational mechanism of indirect translation is explored on the macro level of Peirce's Firstness–Secondness–Thirdness, on the meso level of Peirce's First–Second–Third, and on the micro level of Peirce's Sign–Object–Interpretant.

Keywords: indirect translation; indirect interlingual translation; indirect intralingual translation; intersemiotic translation; semiotic mechanism

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1 Introduction

In 1958, J. P. Vinay & J. Darbelnet, two Canadian scholars from Agrégé de l'Université, started to deal with indirect translation in their *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: Méthode de traduction*. In 1980, Gideon Toury treated indirect translation in a similar way in *In search of translation studies* when he explored the “directness” of translation in the context of translation norms into Hebrew. In 1991, Ernst-August Gutt, in *Translation and*

relevance, introduced the notion of indirect translation in the framework of relevance theory and used it to explore the theoretical implications of the concepts of dynamic and functional equivalence, which originated within the tradition of Bible translation. In 1995, Gideon Toury, in *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*, explored indirect translations in Hebrew literature over the previous 200 years, stressing a symptomatic reversal of roles of German and English as mediating and mediated means respectively, and the tolerant attitude toward them as Hebrew literature was trying to catch up with the Western world, as well as contrasting such tolerance with the prevalent norm at the time which tended to reject mediated translations¹. In 1997, Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie in *Dictionary of translation studies* conducted a comparatively comprehensive analysis of Toury's and Gutt's versions of indirect translation, respectively. In 2009/2016, Giuseppe Palumbo, an Italian translation scholar, introduced in *Key terms in translation studies* Vinay and Darbelnet's view (1958) and Toury's idea (1995) on the roles of indirect translation in Hebrew literature. In 2019, Aba-Carina Pârlog dealt with indirect translation in terms of Roman Jakobson's intralingual translation (1959: 233) and divided it further into adaptation and free translation, which is largely a new development judged either from the perspective of translation studies or semiotics at large. In addition, we also need to emphasize one fact: that any research on indirect translation is inevitably concerned with human cognition. However, some bibliometric analyses of cognitive translation studies in China or most analyses of China's translation studies from a bibliometric perspective, more often than not have ignored indirect translation as one token of both a type of general translation studies and a type of cognitive translation studies, or of the both, which can be seen in Jin and Lin (2016).

Practically, indirect translation can be traced back to the end of the Shang Dynasty and the early Chou Era (around 1000 BC). Going through the historical archives, we may find such a story as recorded in the volume of "Collected biographies of the barbarians in the South and Southwest" of the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書):

Within the 6 years of Duke Chou's regency, he made a peaceful and harmonious world, formulated the etiquettes for his people to follow and created some pieces of elegant music for his people to enjoy. Then the Yueshang State [present-day Vietnam] sent three interpreters as her delegates to present the silver pheasant symbolizing auspiciousness to the Chou Court by means of their relay interpreting in turns, saying: "Yueshang State is located far away from the Chou Court, with the mountains and rivers blocked between

¹ These are actually indirect translations.

and the languages different from that used in the Central Plains where the Royal Court is situated. Therefore, we approach the Court by means of relay interpreting.” The Emperor Cheng bestowed the pheasant to Duke Chou in public, but the Duke responded immediately: “If his virtues have not benefited the others, then a gentleman is not worthy of other people’s gifts; if his benevolent government has not benefited the others, then a gentleman should not regard the others as his subjects. Why do I dare to get such a reward?” To these remarks, one of the delegates replied with respect: “I am entrusted by the Lords of our state. He reasoned that ‘there have been no such disasters as storms or thunderstorms for a long time, so there must be a sage in the Central Empire.’ If there ever was, we need to come and worship him.” Hearing these words, the Duke returned the pheasant to the Emperor Cheng, claiming that it resulted from the efforts of the previous deceased Emperor, and suggesting they sacrifice the bird to the Royal Temple where the deceased Emperor is worshiped. (My translation)

Among the records available now and the historical archives at hand, the story cited above may be the first record of indirect translation practice in royal affairs. Similarly, indirect translation also appeared in early Buddhist sutra translation practice in China. As is recorded in the volume of “Biographies of barbarians in the East” in *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, the *Buddhist Sutra on Sakyamuni*, the earliest Chinese version of the Buddhist sutras, was translated into Chinese via the Indian Monks’ oral forms of interpretation as the intermediate text. As recorded in the Buddhist literatures, the Buddhist sutra translation team is featured typically by indirect cooperative translation practice. Among these ancient Buddhist sutra team translation practices, that of Monk Xuan Zang’s translation team in the Tang Dynasty is the most developed. In his team, nine steps of translation procedures were adopted. Specifically, the first step starts with the interpretation (in the oral form) of the original sutra text (direct translation in the broad sense), under the leadership of a great monk who is proficient in both Chinese and Sanskrit; the second step is focused on semantic check; the third step stresses text collation; the fourth and fifth steps are to transcribe the sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese (direct translation in the strict sense); the sixth step is to arrange and correct the transcript and translated version in accordance with the use conventions of the Chinese language; the seventh step is to conduct two-way proofreading; the eighth step is to make stylistic revisions; the ninth step is to polish the translated versions. In terms of the nature of its operational mechanism, the indirect translation procedure in Buddhist sutra team translation may be termed single-sourced multiplex relay translation.

In modern times, indirect translation is prevalent in sci-tech and humanistic translations. For instance, translations of linguistic classics in the Republic of China (1911–1949) via translations in other languages are prevalent. In *Exploring the Chinese translations of general linguistic classics: 1906–1949*

(2017a), Jia collects some linguistic translation works via Japanese and Esperanto translations as the intermediary translation texts (Jia 2017a: 141–154), and examines in detail one of them – *Linguistics and Esperanto* (1935) – in terms of background information, information content, operational mechanism, and academic significance.

In the new century, Chinese translation scholars started to deal with indirect translation. According to the data from China’s National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) dated September 30, 2019, there are 14 research papers (with the key word *indirect translation* in their titles) published since 2004. The distribution of these research papers is presented in the following table:

Table 1: Research studies with “indirect translation” in the title published since 2004

Publication year	No.	Publication year	No.	Publication year	No.	Publication year	No.
2004	1	2008	2	2012	0	2016	0
2005	0	2009	0	2013	2	2017	2
2006	1	2010	0	2014	2	2018	0
2007	0	2011	1	2015	1	2019	1

Among them, there are 3 master’s theses (Ye 2004; Xi 2008; Liu 2014), 3 conference papers (Luo 2013; Sun 2017; Su 2017), and 8 journal papers (Huang and Zhu 2008; Cai 2008; Xu and Zhang 2009; Wei 2011; Wang and Li 2013; Luo 2014; Rong 2015; Li 2019). As seen in Table 1, the research studies published since 2004 are scarce, especially when compared with those published in the international arena. As for the contents of these papers, a small number are focused on its nature, features, referential range, classifications and types, operational mechanism, theoretical problems, etc. Among them, only Rong (2015) touches sparsely on its types and operational mechanism, but this paper puts its types and operational mechanism into one pocket, making its readers unable to distinguish the general operational mechanism of indirect translation from its specific performance procedures. In general, the situation of indirect translation (in the sense of modern disciplinarity) in China is not as good as that in America and European countries either in publication volume or research depth and breadth. For instance, there are no journals like *Translation Studies* and *Perspectives*, which have published so many high-quality papers on indirect translation.

Although previous research has achieved a lot in some respects (e.g. technical definition[s], description and classification, triggering factors, etc.), promoted the further development of indirect translation, and helped better appreciate its nature, features, classifications, and operational mechanism, this

research has not reached a universally accepted definition for indirect translation either in translation studies or translation semiotics and has not conducted a scientific classification of this translation activity. Above all, a scientific mechanism of the genesis and process of indirect translation is also needed. Given the case in general, this paper aims to address all these problems mentioned above in terms of (translation) semiotics.

2 A critical analysis of the definitions for indirect translation

Among the existing literatures available, several scholars have given their definitions for indirect translation from different perspectives. Among them, the following figures are more important.

Vinay and Darbelnet, in the introduction section of *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: Méthode de traduction* (1958) on the topic of “Traduction directe ou traduction oblique,” indicate that “the translation of a text [is] carried out via an intermediary translation in another language and not directly from the original text” (Palumbo 2016: 72).

Toury (1980), when writing on the “Directness of translation” in his paper “Norms of literary translation into Hebrew, 1930–1945,” considers indirect translation (in an indirect way) as the translation of a text via an intermediary translation into another language instead of directly from the original text. He highlights the languages involved in the indirect translations into Hebrew of that period, namely: (1) no intermediate translations from either Russian, Polish, or Yiddish; (2) the majority of the translations from secondary source languages (SLs), such as the Scandinavian languages, Spanish, Czech, or Chinese, being intermediate; (3) intermediate translation on a small scale done from German, and on a larger scale from English; (4) the main intermediating languages being Russian and German (1980: 126). Toury probes into the three factors responsible for this situation, i.e. (1) the prestige attached to certain languages and/or literatures, (2) the extent of mastery of those languages, and (3) the existence of certain translations (1980: 126–127), and finally points out that indirect translation is norms-governed, so literary translation from English and German during the past 15 years comes much closer to the pole of acceptability in the Hebrew systems and subsystems (literary as well as linguistic) than TT (short for target text) is going to form part of than it comes to the pole of the adequate translation (1980: 136).

Gutt (1991) defines indirect translation as the strategy used by the translator when the dilemma between “the need to give the receptor language audience access to the authentic meaning of the original, unaffected by the translator’s own interpretation effort” (1991: 177) and “the urge to communicate as clearly as possible” (1991: 177) is resolved in favor of the latter, highlighting that an indirect translation expands upon and elucidates ST so that the implicit information which it contains and which is easily retrievable by the SL audience in the original context envisaged by the ST (source text) writer will be equally available to the TL (target language) audience. Gutt points out that an indirect translation created for a communicative context which differs significantly from the original context is likely to include large amounts of additional interpolated explanatory information, which is, however, considered faithful inasmuch as it resembles the original in “relevant respects” (see 1991: 111).

Toury (1995), in Chapter 7 of *Descriptive translation studies and beyond* on the topic “A lesson from indirect translation,” observes that “as a culturally relevant phenomenon, second-hand translation forms much more than a mere *legitimate* object for research” and that “it [second-hand translation] presents a convenient means of moving from observable phenomena to underlying factors, precisely because its external manifestations are often easy to discern and its contours relatively simple to draw” (p. 130). He reviews the second-hand translation practice of Hebrew literature for the past 200 years, and points out its preconditions that “(1) for the mere application of translation procedures on the way to a Hebrew end product, one text is as good as any other” while “(2) a text which was conceived of as appropriate from the point of view of the target literature could well have been encountered in translated forms”. He further observes that “(3) a translation tended to be selected for translation into Hebrew precisely as any other text would; namely, on the basis of its position in the mediating system, with no regard for the position of its own original in the source literature” (1995: 133). The “second-hand translation” cited hereby is actually indirect translation in Toury parole.

Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) define indirect translation as “the procedure whereby a text is not translated directly from an original ST, but via an intermediate translation in another language” (1997: 76). They exemplify Toury’s (1980, 1995) views on indirect translation being norm-governed and the tolerance of different literary systems toward indirect translation to varying extents. Shuttleworth and Cowie highlight the preconditions of indirect translation being the mastery of languages and textual acceptability and reveal the fact that although “indirect translation is relatively widespread in some parts of the world, it is not a procedure which is generally approved of” (1997: 76). The authors then move on to the views held by Gutt (1991), reminding us

that, based on the definition of indirect translation given by Gutt himself, “a strategy of indirect translation is frequently employed when translating the Bible into languages which are rooted in cultures and world-views radically different from those presupposed by the original, or from the translator’s own” (1997: 77).

Fang regards indirect translation as one kind of retranslation practice and its end products, defining it as “the translation of a text via an intermediate translation in another language as a virtual source text instead of directly from the original text” (2005: 132; 2013: 133) and citing the indirect translations of Buddhist sutra scriptures in ancient China, of Greek literary works in Great Britain, of Shakespearean works in Hungary, Serbia, and Luxembourg, of the French and Russian literary works in early Japan, etc. as examples to show the prevalence of indirect translation in various countries through history. Fang further reveals that in the majority of cases, indirect translation is adopted as a last resort, especially in the case of translating texts written in languages not quite familiar to the translators and the target audiences, precisely because the translators in and from any country are not likely to master all the world languages. Finally, Fang (2005, 2013) warns us through comparisons conducted between the original texts and the indirect translations of *Fairy Tales and Stories* written by Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875) as well as of the *Divine Comedy* written by Alighieri Dante (1265–1321), that indirect translations of literary works via an intermediate translation from other cultural contexts will possibly come up with two-degree deformations and distortions.

Palumbo (2016: 72) rewrites in English the definition of indirect translation given by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) and sums up the roles of indirect translation proposed by Toury (1995: 130), so he does not add anything new and inspiring.

Pârlog (2019: 42) starts with Jakobson’s intralingual or endolingual translation and redefines it as “the transposition of a text from one form into another within the same language.” Based on this definition, he further divides it into (1) rephrasing or reformulating, i.e. the change of linguistic formulation or of construction or register, which is based on synonymy; (2) paraphrasing, i.e. explicitation of meaning, which is based on explanation; (3) adaptation, i.e. loosely expressing the same idea in the same language; and (4) free translation, i.e. interpreting meaning by indirectly translating the original construction or phrase intralingually. It can be seen that he considers the first two as direct intralingual translation while the last two as indirect intralingual translation in his own system.

Based on the definitions listed above, a critical analysis may be conducted in terms of the nature, features, referential range, and classifications of indirect

translation. In passing, the sign typology will be reviewed with reference to indirect translation as a sign process and an end product of this special sign process. As for its nature, indirect translation is regarded as the translation of a text via an intermediary translation in another language, not directly from the original text. This almost universally accepted definition is given in its narrowest sense, excluding more or less from its referential range the interactions and transformations between linguistic or verbal signs and non-linguistic or verbal signs, and ignoring the interactions and transformations between tangible signs and intangible signs (see Jia 2016, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Semiotically, as a process, indirect translation is in its broadest sense the transformation (here used as a superordinate term to include any change of a sign text) of a sign text via a genuine or virtual intermediate or mediated sign transformation work, but not directly from an initial and original sign text, while as a transformation work, indirect translation in its broadest sense is a transformation work via a genuine or virtual intermediary sign transformation work instead of directly having been transformed from an initial and original sign text.

Given its features, indirect translation involves more than three linguistic forms or sign forms in general. If occurring within one language system or sign system, i.e. within Jakobson's intralingual translation in the narrowest sense or Jia's sign transformation in the broadest sense, there must be one intermediate or mediated sign text between the initial sign text as its departure point and the target sign text, as is the case of the sign text changing from a novel written in ancient Chinese into a play via the modernized simple Chinese version as its intermediate sign text. If occurring across language systems or sign systems, there is at least one intermediate sign text between the initial sign text and the target sign text, as is the case of the sign text change from a novel written in L_a to L_c via a translated text in L_b as the intermediate text. In actual fact, indirect translation may be more complicated. When a translator is translating Shakespearean works into modern Chinese, s/he may adopt a modernized English translated version directly or indirectly translated from the original work as her initial text, put this translated work into his or her oral forms, and change the oral forms into the final target text, in which case there occur two intermediate texts in different language systems. As is seen in the examples above, the filtration of various degrees may occur inevitably in this sign process. For the translational phenomenon with a single intermediate text, there appears one two-degree deformation while another two-degree deformation and even distortions will occur in the translational activities with two intermediate texts in two language systems.

Next comes the referential range of indirect translation. Going through the literature available, we find that most research refers to indirect translation as “the translation of a text via the translation of an intermediate text in another language and not directly from the original text,” i.e. relay translation or one kind of retranslation (practice) as Fang (2005/2013) puts it. However, indirect translation may have a broader referential range, thus forming a continuum of its referential range (such as relay translation, (technique-based) mediated translation, human mediated translation, adaptation, free translation, etc.). As Pârlog (2019: 42) reveals, adaptation (loosely expressing the same idea in the same language) and free translation (interpreting meaning by indirectly translating the original construction or phrase intralingually) are also included in indirect translation on the levels of both intralingual and interlingual translations (actually, this range may be broader if semiotically considered). In terms of indirect translation as a special sign process, its referential range is broader, and furthermore indirect translation that occurs intralingually or/and interlingually is by nature a form of sign transformation or more specifically intersemiotic translation (i.e. sign transformation) as is illustrated correctly in Stecconi (2004: 471–473) and Hartanam-Heinonen (2012: 115–120). Otherwise, if considering indirect translation as one kind of retranslation in a narrower sense, its referential range is partially included in the category of retranslation, as is shown in Figure 1, as follows:

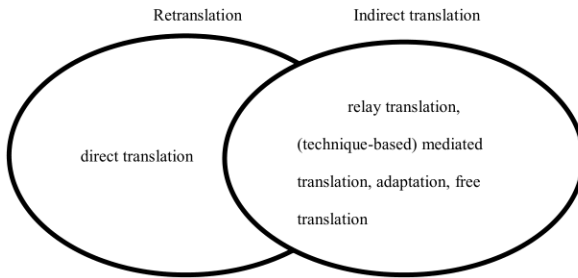


Figure 1: Reference range of retranslation and indirect translation

In order to assure the acceptability of the translated texts among potential audiences due to language barriers and to resolve the translators’ dilemma in translating directly from the original text, indirect translation is adopted as a quick trick at the moment when some languages are not mastered well or universally used in a given community. However, indirect translation is not

limited only to the sign transformations between linguistic or verbal signs if considering the sign typology and sign transformation in the broadest sense, though it is still prevalent worldwide nowadays. As is shown in Pârlog (2019: 42), indirect translation may occur within the same language system. Similarly, it may also occur between different language pairs. In fact, indirect translation exists everywhere all the time if we consider translation and sign transformation in the broad sense, namely any sign activity with an intermediate sign text or mediated sign text, tangible or intangible, between the tangible and intangible signs. Last but not least, there are still problems left in its scientific classification, although Rong (2015: 33–35) has divided indirect translation into six types, by considering the cases of translational phenomena in China through history. Therefore, there is more work left to do with its scientific classification and operational mechanism in terms of semiotics.

3 Classification of indirect translation

Description and classification have been the two major tasks for scientific inquiry. In translation studies, translation semiotics, and semiotics at large, they also enjoy the same roles. As for the scientific classification of indirect translation, Rong (2015) has attempted to propose six types. However, Rong's typology is not only a combination of indirect translation classification and operational mechanism description, but a work with its mechanism not properly and clearly illustrated. What is more, Rong does not take into consideration the indirect translation practice and procedure in the tradition of the Buddhist sutra translation team in ancient China. Grounded on Rong's (2015) typology, this paper revises the six types of indirect translation and attempts to illustrate with a chart the indirect translation practice and translation procedure of the Buddhist sutra team. Finally, a new typology will be proposed in terms of the language types involved in indirect translation practice and semiotics at large.

Firstly, I will revise and polish the six types of indirect translation proposed by Rong (2015) in order to make them better models to present the situation of indirect translation practice and procedure in actual sign activities. Then I propose my model for indirect translation practice in the tradition of the Buddhist sutra translation team in ancient China. The six revised types of indirect translation will be presented as the following:

(1) Conventional single-sourced indirect translation: the translation of a text (TT = target text) in L_b by means of the translation in L_c as an intermediate text (IT =

indirect translation) instead of translating directly from the original text (ST = source text) in L_a , as is shown in Figure 2 below:

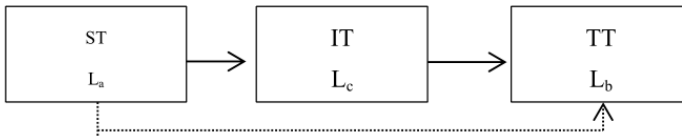


Figure 2: Conventional double-sourced indirect translation process

This type is commonly used in transferring the message carried by ST in L_a into L_b because the translator has not mastered the L_a well and turns to the translated text directly from L_c , if such an intermediate translation text existed at that moment. In terms of the message carried in the ST and transferred into the TT, as well as the law of sign energy reservation, we use the TT as a translation of the ST, though it is not translated directly from the original text. In fact, the procedure and process as shown in the model above may be divided into two stages of interlingual translation. In the first stage, the translation text (IT) used as an intermediate text is translated directly from the ST while in the second stage, the TT is translated directly from the virtual ST as the original text as an intermediate text (IT) in L_c . Only considered in terms of the whole translation process and practice can we clearly see the indirect translation practice between the ST in L_a and L_b via the IT in L_c as shown by the dotted arrow in the model.

(2) Conventional double-sourced indirect translation: a variation of the conventional indirect translation in translating a text (TT) in L_b not directly from the original text (ST) in L_a , but via the intermediary translation text (IT₁) in L_c with reference to another intermediate translation text (IT₂) in L_d , as is shown in Figure 3 below:

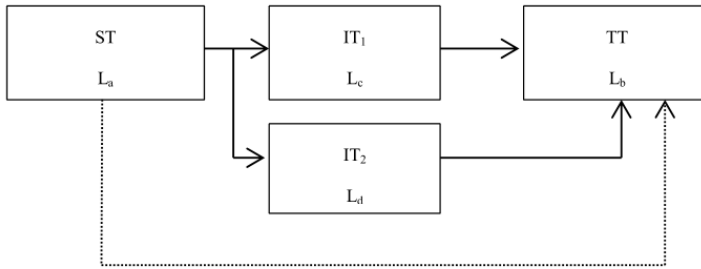


Figure 3: Conventional double-sourced indirect translation process

Comparatively, the first type, conventional indirect translation,” is by nature a single-sourced indirect translation, as the translator only refers to one source as the virtual initial departure point of his or her sign transformation activity. However, in this model the translator as an interpreter of the original text (ST) who may not have mastered the language in which the ST was written well, turns to two sources for help, the two texts translated directly from the ST in L_c and L_d respectively. The translator in this way transfers the message carried in the ST from L_a into L_b via the translated text in L_c and L_d . Similarly, this model of indirect translation from ST to TT is made up of two stages. In the first stage, a direct translation occurs from ST in L_a to the translated texts in L_c and L_d , which together serve as the initial sign text (IT) for the second stage of direct translation from the IT to TT. In terms of the message source, TT by nature serves as a translation in L_b via the ITs in L_c and L_d , so this relation is shown by the dotted line and arrow in the model. As both ITs are directly translated from the ST and serve as the actual message source for the TT, the relations between them are shown in solid lines (the solid line, dotted line, and arrow in the following models are used to indicate the same situation as is illustrated here).

(3) Single-sourced relay translation: the translation of a text (TT) in L_b via either the others’ translation text (IT) in L_b or his/her own translation text made previously (IT) as an intermediate translation text, but not directly from the original text (ST) in L_a , either of which is a rewriting or reinterpretation by nature, as is indicated in Figure 4 below:

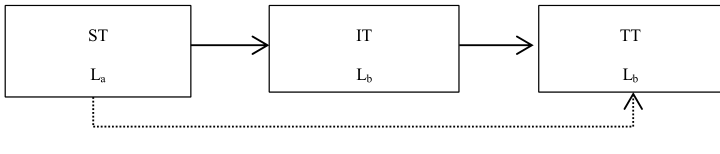


Figure 4: Single-sourced relay translation process

Considering the translation from ST in L_a to TT in L_b, the indirect translation between them consists of an interlingual translation between ST and IT (a TT translated directly from L_a) and an intralingual translation between IT (an actual initial sign text in this sign activity) in L_b and the final TT in L_b. Given the nature of sign activity types, the second stage in this model is also an intralingual translation, similar to that in the second stage in (4).

(4) Multi-sourced relay translation: The translation of a text (TT) in L_b by means of referring comprehensively to the multiple intermediary translation texts rendered previously (IT₁...IT_n) instead of translating directly from the original text (ST), as is illustrated below in Figure 5:

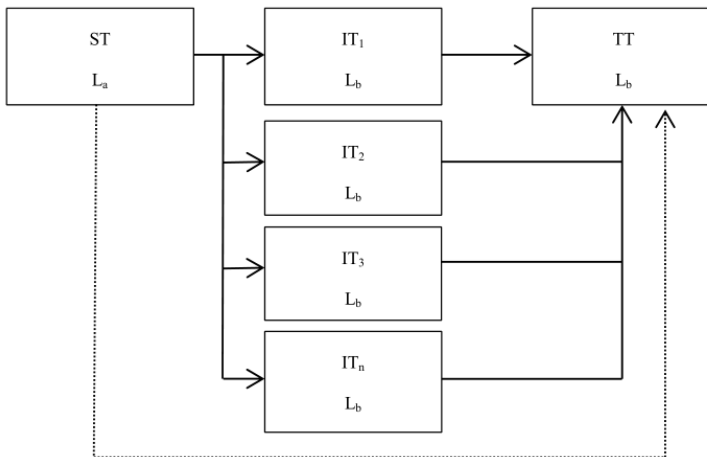


Figure 5: Multi-sourced relay translation process

Though we term this model multi-sourced indirect translation, it is different from single-sourced and double-sourced indirect translation in that the initial sign texts in the single- and double-sourced models are the intermediate

translation texts in the languages different from the target language, while the initial sign texts in this model are the translated texts as the intermediate translation texts (IT₁...IT_n) in the same language as the target language in the final TT. What's more, in the first stage of translation in the model, a direct translation occurs from the ST in L_a into the translated texts in L_b, while in the second stage an intralingual translation occurs with the translated texts in L_b serving as the actual initial sign texts (a multi-sourced initial sign text) for the TT in L_b. This situation is usually seen in retranslations of the same foreign work. As the TT is made from translations of the same work written in a foreign language, and the translator in the intralingual translation process adopts all the good expressions from the previously translated texts as the intermediate texts, the thus made TT has either deviated too much from the ST in the amount and quality of message or is seriously deformed in the formal structure and rhetorical devices (style).

(5) Interpreter-based relay translation: The translation of a text (TT) in L_b based on an interpreter's text in the oral form as an intermediate translation text (potential IT), but not directly from the original text (ST) in L_a, which is usually prevalent in the cooperative translation work between interpreters and translators, as is illustrated in Figure 6 below:

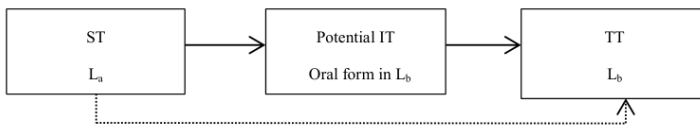


Figure 6: Interpreter-based relay translation process

This type of indirect translation is usually seen in cooperative translation practice for literary works, in which the translator is not familiar with the language the initial sign text was written in, but notes down the interpreter's interpretation in the target oral form and further polishes it into a better form in the target language. In addition, interpreter-based indirect translation is also seen in the Court Registrars' question records, which are rearranged more or less from the court interpreter's work. By nature, the interlingual direct translation between the ST in L_a and potential IT in L_b is an interpretation in oral form while the intralingual translation based on the potential IT is also a direct translation. Only when considering the sign activity from the ST to the final TT via the potential IT is the whole translation process by nature an indirect translation.

(6) Marginalized indirect translation or indirect translation in reverse translation as indirect translation in intralingual translation: the translation of a text (TT) in L_a is based on the intermediate translation text (IT) in L_b , but not directly from the original text in L_a , while indirect translation in reverse translation occurs in the same language by means of the translation text in another language, but this indirect translation is inevitably a text with double filtration and serious two-degree deformation, as is shown in Figure 7 below:

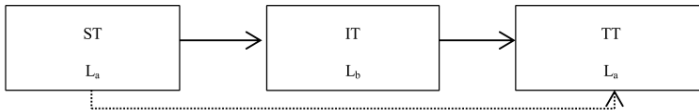


Figure 7: Marginalized indirect translation process

This type of indirect translation is uniquely different from all the types mentioned above. The translation from the ST to the final TT is by nature an intralingual translation via a direct translation text in a foreign language as an intermediate translation text. In terms of the translation process, it consists of two direct translation processes, namely from ST in L_a to TT (an IT in L_b as an intermediate translation text as an initial sign text) and from the IT as a new initial sign text to the final TT in L_a . This practice model is commonly seen in reverse translation of Chinese overseas sinologist works.

Theoretically, Rong's (2015) classification types (1) and (2) belong to interlingual indirect translation, in contrast to Pârlog's (2019: 42) intralingual indirect translation; (3) and (4) belong to the category of intralingual indirect translation; (5) is interlingual translation-based intralingual indirect translation; and (6) is double interlingual translation-based interlingual indirect translation. In Rong's type (5), the interpreters' work in the actual translation process may be presented in overt and covert forms. The former is only confined to interpreter-based indirect translation, while the latter is prevalent in almost all cases of sign interpretation and sign activities. Hereby, we can see that this model is strictly conditioned; otherwise the situation in this model would be totally different if considered semiotically. In the final analysis, Rong (2019) does not take into account the case of the Buddhist team translation activities two thousand years ago.

In the tradition of Buddhist team translation, a monk who is familiar with foreign languages, such as Sanskrit and Tocharian, among other central Asian languages, interprets the Buddhist sutra scriptures in oral form, another monk notes down his interpretations, a third monk arranges the second monk's

initially arranged sutra texts into a formal text in ancient Chinese, a fourth monk polishes this formal text, followed by the other monks' efforts in making it into a polished and commonly accepted text. The indirect translation in the Buddhist sutra translation can be termed (7) team-based indirect translation, which can be shown as the following model:

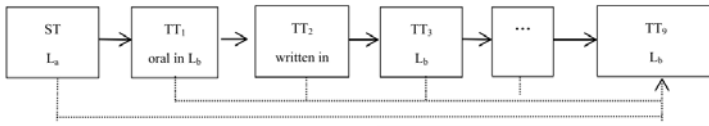


Figure 8: Team-based indirect translation process

In Figure 8, the translation process is divided into two stages. In the first stage, the translation process starts with the original text in L_a or supposed original text in L_a , which is rendered into the first translated text as an intermediate translation text in L_b . The solid arrow between ST and TT_1 indicates the actual (direct and overt) process and cause–effect textual relation, while the dotted arrow between ST as the initial sign text and TT_n as the ephemeral final interpretant indicates the virtual (indirect and covert) process and cause–effect textual relation. The second stage starts with TT_1 as an initial sign text and the first intermediate oral translation text in L_b and ends with TT_n as an end translation product and an ephemeral final interpretant, which is by nature intralingual indirect translation. In fact, in the indirect translation process, each translation text before the final text (TT_n) serves in turn as an intermediate translation text in L_b , leading to the final authorized translation in accordance with the Buddhist translation procedure. The solid arrows in the second stage indicate the same sign relation as in the first stage while the dotted lines and arrow represent the virtual relations between the ST, the intermediate translation texts ($TT_1 \cdots TT_n$), and the final end product (TT_n).

The indirect translation types shown above are results of a classification based on the indirect translation operational mechanism and procedure. If considered from the perspectives of the languages involved in indirect translation and (translation) semiotics, new classifications of indirect translation will be obtained from this. In terms of the languages, indirect translation may be divided into intralingual and interlingual types, with (3), (4), (5), and (7) mentioned above being the typical examples of the former type, while (1), (2), and (6) mentioned above are typical examples of the latter type. In the two types, relay translation, adaptation, free translation, reverse translation,

etc. are included, forming a matrix of indirect translation, which can be illustrated in the following tree diagram:

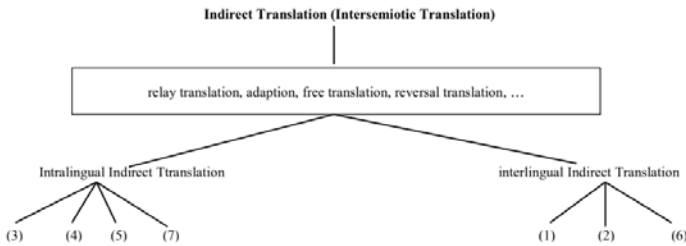


Figure 9: Classification of IT types

Considering the nature of indirect translation on the intralingual and interlingual levels as a form of translation as a special semiosis (translational semiosis, Gorlée's [1994] term), the sign activities on both the intralingual and interlingual levels are by nature sign activities between signs of the same kind and form and/or different kinds and forms, namely intersemiotic activities by nature. In other words, as a special kind of translation in its broadest sense, indirect translation, either intralingual or interlingual, is an intersemiotic transformation. In terms of the signs presented in physical and mental forms, i.e. tangible (T) signs and intangible (I) signs (see Jia 2016, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019), indirect translation may be divided accordingly into the following types: (1) T→T indirect translation; (2) T→I indirect translation; (3) I→T indirect translation; (4) T+I→T indirect translation; (5) T+I→I indirect translation; (6) T→T+I indirect translation; and (7) I→T+I indirect translation.

In terms of semiotics and translation semiotics, the operational mechanism of indirect translation is also different from that held and illustrated by translation scholars. Semioticians hold a different view of translation, translation process, and translation mechanism, among other translation phenomena, and have different goals in dealing with translational activities as a special sign activity or semiosis, so how do they deal with the operational mechanism of indirect translation?

4 Semiotic mechanism of indirect translation

However, to continue the topic of the semiotic mechanism of indirect translation, we believe it necessary to learn what semiotics is and the nature of its operational mechanism in terms of semiotics. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), one of the founding fathers of semiotics, holds the concept of semiotics to be the “formal science of signs” and the pragmatic notion of meaning as the “action of signs” (semiosis). Primarily, Peirce’s semiotics is grounded on a triad of Firstness (the *possible*)–Secondness (the *actual*)–Thirdness (the *would be*), namely:

First is the conception of being or existing independent of anything else. Second is the conception of being relative to, the conception of reaction with, something else. Third is the conception of mediation, whereby a first and second are brought into relation [...] Feeling is First, sense of reaction Second [...] the tendency to take habits is Third. (CP 6.32)

In other words, *Firstness* is what is such as it is, without reference to anything else; *Secondness* is what is such as it is, in relation to something else, but without relation to any third entity; *Thirdness* is what is such as it is, insofar as it is capable of bringing a second entity into relation with a first one in the same way that it brings itself into relation with the first and the second entities (Queiroz and Merrell 2006: 39–40). Of the three, “Thirdness underlines the process of semiosis in its full estimation, and is representative of the emergence of new possibility (Firstness) from out of the continuity of being in-habit (Thirdness) with an environment, felt and realized through the encounter with exterior resistance (Secondness)” (Olteanu and Campbell 2018: 250). Put in Peirce’s own words, “Thirdness essentially involves the production of effects in the world of existence, not by furnishing energy, but by the gradual development of Law” (EP 2:271).

As for the quality of this triad, Peirce himself holds that “Firstness is the category of vagueness, freedom, novelty and originality, the mode of being which consists in its subject’s being positively such as it is regardless of anything else” (CP 1.25); “Secondness is the category of reaction, opposition, differentiation, existence, genuine Secondness consisting in one thing acting upon another” (CP 8.330); “Thirdness is the category of mediation, habit, generality, growth, and conceptualization or cognition” (CP 1.340). In other words, Firstness is possibility, what *might become*; Secondness is what is taken to be what is within some particular context; and Thirdness is what in all probability *would be*, given a certain set of conditions (Queiroz and Merrell 2006: 40).

Given the concept of Peirce's semiotics, the operational mechanism of indirect translation is essentially the mechanism of sign process concerning indirect translation as a special type of translation in general in its broadest sense, as a special sign activity as a translational semiosis (Gorlée's term). In essence, the operational mechanism of indirect translation is a writerly approach (Martínez's [2015] term) to the translational semiosis involving "the translation of a sign text via one or more intermediate translation text(s) in the same sign system or different sign systems as the initial sign text(s) as a whole in terms of information, but not directly from the original sign text." Moving to the operational mechanism of indirect translation in details, we need to deal with it on the macro and micro levels.

On the macro level, the sign texts involved in indirect translation as a special sign activity or semiosis may be categorized into Peirce's triadic categories of Firstness–Secondness–Thirdness, namely ST being in the sign category of Firstness, being a First; IT being in the sign category of Secondness, being a Second; and TT being in the sign category of Thirdness, being a Third. Specifically, ST as a First in the category of Firstness has the qualities of vagueness, freedom, novelty, and originality; IT as a Second in the category of Secondness has the qualities of reaction, opposition, differentiation, and existence; and TT as a Third in the category of Thirdness has the qualities of mediation, habit, generality, growth, conceptualization, and cognition.

In terms of semiotic sign relations among the sign texts involved in indirect translation as a special semiosis, ST stands alone, serving as a stimulus for the potential interpreters, with the qualities mentioned above as the information source of sign interpretations. Thus IT is the existence of a new sign text standing for something, without relation to any third entity, serving as the results of reaction to the stimulus from the ST, resulting in the differentiation in this new sign text from the ST in terms of style and information amount. TT is the final sign text via the IT directly translated from the ST standing for a relation between the first and the second entities, serving as the result of sign mediation, sign growth, generality, sign-use habits (conventions), conceptualization, and cognition. In abstract terms, the ST as the sign product of the author as a sign user and a sign text creator stands as what *might become* as it is in terms of information and sign energy. IT as a direct translation of the ST and an initial sign text of the final TT sign text stands as what is as it is in terms of information and sign energy, and what is more, IT exists as a sign text as a result of sign energy reservation. And TT as the final sign text via the IT as a direct sign translation text stands as what would be, as it is in terms of information and sign energy, the final interpretant of the IT directly translated from the ST, presenting the ephemerally final result of translators' mediation,

habit, cognition, and conceptualization, as well as sign generality and sign growth. Finally, what is illustrated above is presented in Table 2, as follows:

Table 2: Indirect translation process in Peirce's Firstness–Secondness–Thirdness

	Firstness	Secondness	Thirdness
Types	ST	IT	TT
Quality	vagueness, freedom, novelty, originality	reaction, opposition, differentiation, existence	mediation, habit, generality, growth, conceptualization, cognition
Status	stands alone	stands for something, in relation with any third entity	stands for relation between the first and the second entities
Relation	might become (the <i>possible</i>)	is (the <i>actual</i>)	would be

As is illustrated in terms of Peirce's triadic sign categorization, the ST is a First, the IT is a Second, while the TT is a Third. On the meso level, the First is equivalent to Peirce's sign *per se*; the Second is equivalent to Peirce's object, while the Third is equivalent to his interpretant. Specifically, the sign is the ST with the qualities of vagueness, freedom, and novelty, the object is the message and information carried in the ST and the IT as the result of the ST's sign interpretation and transformation (an intersemiotic direction translation as a special semiosis), while the interpretant is the message and information carried in the ST and transferred from the ST via the IT into the TT as the final/logic/communicative interpretant as the end product of this intersemiotic direct translation, whether intralingual or interlingual, tangible or intangible, although the whole sign process from the ST to the TT via IT is an intersemiotic indirect translation consisting in two-stage intersemiotic direct translational semiosis.

Similarly, on the micro level, the form of the initial sign text presenting the textual information is the sign *per se* in terms of Peirce's semiotics, the information presented in the initial text signs or forms is the dynamic object, and the final/logic/communicative interpretant resulting in interpreting the dynamic object is another text form or sign text serving as the TT. In terms of indirect translation as a whole sign process, an indirect translation as a final/logic/communicative interpretant and an end translation product consists in two stages of this triadic process. In the first stage, the sign process starts with the ST as an initial sign text, resulting in an ephemeral final/logic/communicative interpretant (a TT) by means of sign interpretation

and transformation. In the second stage, the TT resulting from the sign interpretation and transformation in the first stage of the sign process serves as a new initial sign text, resulting in another final/logic/communicative interpretant, the ephemeral end product (TT).

As is illustrated above, the sign process involving indirect translation and its operational mechanism may be formed in the following diagram:

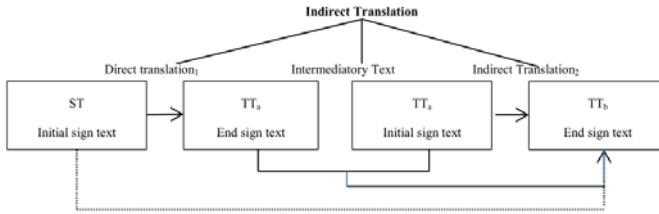


Figure 10: Operational mechanism of IT sign process

Frankly, this model of IT operational mechanism is an ideal one, which may involve various possible and potential factors in the actual sign process. Therefore, it may become more complicated in a specific indirect translation process. Regardless of how complicated it may be, the operational mechanism as a semiotic procedure is kept the same. Accordingly, this model of the IT operational mechanism may inspire future research on indirect translation in terms of processual and interpretive semiotics.

Finally, if considering the interpretant in terms of indirect translation or translation at large from Peirce’s three divisions of interpretant, namely immediate interpretant–dynamic interpretant–final interpretant, emotional interpretant–energetic interpretant–logic interpretant, and intentional interpretant–effectual interpretant–communicative interpretant, the source text as the initial sign text, carrying its three groups of interpretants though, serves as the source of final/logic/communicative interpretants for the intermediate sign text (IT). Subsequently, this intermediate sign text as the initial sign text for the next stage of the sign process, carrying its three groups of interpretants, serves as the indirect source of final/logic/communicative interpretants for the target text (TT). In general, the sign transformation from ST to TT via IT is an interpretative and processual sign process from its immediate interpretant to dynamic interpretant, and finally reaching its final interpretant; the sign transformation from ST to TT via IT is a process of sign growth and evolution as well as a sign text starting from emotional interpretant to energetic interpretant and finally coming to its logic interpretant, such as it is if considered in terms of

sign energy reservation; furthermore, the sign process from ST to TT via IT is a process of transferring and transmitting information or intentions sent from the author, starting from the author's intention and the potential effects to be obtained, and coming to its communication.

5 Conclusion

Grounded on the historical development of indirect translation in Canada, America, China, and European countries, a critical analysis of the definitions previously given for indirect translation (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958; Toury 1980; Gutt 1991; Toury 1995; Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997; Fang 2005, 2013; Palumbo 2016; Pârlog 2019) has been conducted in terms of its nature, features, referential range, and classifications as well as the sign typology involved in indirect translation as a sign process and an end product of this sign process. We find that the almost universally accepted definition of indirect translation as the translation of a text via an intermediate translation text in another language and not directly from the original text is given in its narrowest sense, excluding more or less from its referential range the interactions and transformations between linguistic or verbal signs and non-linguistic or verbal signs, and ignoring the interactions and transformations between tangible signs and intangible signs. As a sign activity in its broadest sense, we redefine it as the transformation of a sign text via a genuine or virtual intermediate or mediated sign transformation work, but not directly from an initial and original sign text. As a transformation work, we redefine it as a transformation work via a genuine or virtual intermediate sign transformation work instead of directly having been transformed from an initial and original sign text. Further, the paper discussed the features of intersemiotic indirect translation in terms of intralingual and interlingual indirect translation, especially with the cases of a single oral form of interpretation, a single intermediate translation text, a sign interpretation as a quasi-intermediate translation text, and multiple intermediate translation texts. Finally, we pointed out that its referential range may include relay translation, (technique-based) mediated translation, adaptation, free translation, etc., and discussed the overlap between the categories of retranslation and those of indirect translation.

Based on Rong (2015)'s indirect translation typology, this paper re-names and polishes the six types of indirect translation (conventional single-sourced indirect translation, conventional double-sourced indirect translation, single-sourced relay translation, multi-sourced relay translation, interpreter-based

relay translation, indirect translation in reverse translation) and attempts to illustrate with a diagram the indirect translation practice of Buddhist sutra team translation procedure, i.e. single-sourced multi-layered relay translation. Finally, a new typology will be proposed in terms of language types involved in indirect translation practice and semiotics at large. In terms of semiotics, we categorize indirect translation into the category of intersemiotic translation, divide it into intralingual indirect translation and interlingual indirect translation, and, in accordance with the sign typology consisting in tangible and intangible signs, divide further the broadly-defined indirect translation into seven cases: (1) T→T indirect translation; (2) T→I indirect translation; (3) I→T indirect translation; (4) T+I→T indirect translation; (5) T+I→I indirect translation; (6) T→T+I indirect translation; and (7) I→T+I indirect translation.

Finally, the paper explored the operational mechanism of indirect translation on the macro level of Peirce's Firstness–Secondness–Thirdness, on the meso level of Peirce's First–Second–Third, and on the micro level of Peirce's Sign–Object–Interpretant, as well as Peirce's three groups of interpretants (immediate interpretant–dynamic interpretant–final interpretant, emotional interpretant–energetic interpretant–logic interpretant, intentional interpretant–effectual interpretant–communicative interpretant). Ideally, the paper proposes a model of an indirect translation operational mechanism and hopes to inspire future research on indirect translation in terms of processual and interpretative semiotics, among others.

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