

Navigating the Continuum: Exploring the Value of Pluralism in Translation Uncertainty Research

Ghodrat Hassani^{1*}

Marzieh Malekshahi²

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Abstract

In recent years, uncertainty has become a central topic in translation studies, reflecting the increasing significance of this issue in various fields, such as politics, economics, and medicine. However, there is a problem with the application of theories of uncertainty in translation studies as often only a single theory is used to provoke an argument without considering how the plurality of theories could provide a more nuanced understanding. This paper argues for the value of synthesizing these seemingly disparate theories of uncertainty into a rich account that can be used as a model for scholarly analyses and research in translation methods and systems. Through an examination of continuum-based models, which are models suggesting that translation is not a strict binary process but rather a continuum of possibilities, this study illustrates how this approach can offer insights that would not be accessible through a single theory. By providing specific examples mainly from the fields of literary and audiovisual translations, this paper demonstrates how a pluralistic approach to the uncertainty paradigm can further strengthen arguments against continuum-based models, and how it can lead to a better understanding of the translation process.

Keywords: continuum, dichotomy, fuzzy logic, plurality, uncertainty

* Corresponding author

¹ Translation Department, Damghan University, Damghan, Iran; q.hassani@du.ac.ir

² Translation Department, Damghan University, Damghan, Iran; m.malekshahi@du.ac.ir

Introduction

The primary aim of this article is to investigate the potential benefits of utilizing a diverse range of theories of uncertainty within the field of translation studies, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding and address the issue of uncertainty. Although the richness and nuance that one theory of uncertainty captures may be implicit in other theories, each theory foregrounds certain aspects of a problem and can add further nuance to our argument that would otherwise be missing. Building upon Blumczynski and Hassani's (2019) work entitled "Towards a meta-theoretical model for translation: A multidimensional approach," this study examines continuum-based models as an illustration of the problem of uncertainty. The selection of continuum-based models as an illustration is justified by the prevalence of these models in various theories of translation studies (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019).

The continuum model is a versatile and influential tool employed in translation studies. It aims to enable researchers to transcend the constraints of binary thinking and gain a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies of translation. This model is employed in the examination of actual translations. It indeed serves as a means of positioning translations on a spectrum between opposing extremes, such as literal and free translation. Additionally, it is utilized in connection to abstract theoretical concepts, such as equivalence.

The concept of equivalence is a fundamental aspect of the continuum model and has been widely discussed by various scholars in their definitions of translation. This includes scholars, such as Jakobson (2000), Catford (1965), Nida and Taber (1982), Newmark (1988), Koller (1995), Halverson (1997), among others. However, a recurring theme in these theoretical accounts is the use of binary dichotomies, such as Nida's (2004) distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence, Catford's (1965) distinction between formal correspondence and textual equivalence, Newmark's (1988) distinction between semantic and communicative translation, House's (1997) distinction between overt and covert translation, Toury's (2012) distinction between adequate and acceptable translation, and Venuti's (2008) distinction between foreignizing and domesticating translation.

In addition to its application in the discussions of equivalence, the continuum model has also been employed in other theoretical discussions of

translation. For example, Henitiuk (2008) emphasizes the wide range of linguistic and cultural transfers along a continuum from literal to free. Colina (2008) refers to the concept of the evaluation continuum, noting that the categories under evaluation are not discrete and bounded, but rather form a continuum each. Meylaerts and Gonne (2014, p. 147) argue that translation studies can “contribute to a new and flexible conceptualization of agent roles within a continuum of overlapping practices.” Similarly, Toury's translational norms (2012), which refer to the constraints and regularities that govern translation in a given culture, can be seen as existing on a continuum, allowing researchers to consider the range of possibilities that exists within a culture in terms of the translation norms and practices. Even-Zohar's (1979) polysystem theory, which emphasizes the role of translation in shaping literary systems, also relies on the idea of a continuum to understand the relationships between different literary works and translations. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the role of translation in shaping literary systems and how it interacts with other elements within the system. It also highlights the dynamic nature of literary systems and how they are constantly evolving as a result of the introduction of translated works. Furthermore, the use of the continuum in this context paves the way for the recognition of the diversity of translated works, and how they can have varying levels of influence on the literary system, rather than a simplistic binary approach of *good* and *bad* translations.

As the above discussion illustrates, continuum models have been widely used to understand the complexities of translation. However, despite the prevalence of continuum models in translation studies, their limitations have not been fully explored. This lack of critical examination may limit the ability of researchers to fully understand the intricacies of translation and to develop more effective and nuanced approaches to translation studies.

Previous research in translation studies has acknowledged certain limitations of continuum-based models in addressing dichotomous thinking (e.g., Torresi, 2013; Tymoczko, 2010). However, Blumczynski and Hassani's (20119) work is the only study to date that has systematically evaluated these limitations and proposed a solution. Our analysis suggests that their critique of continuum-based models could be enhanced by incorporating a broader range of theories of uncertainty, instead of solely relying on fuzzy logic. To fully grasp the concept of

uncertainty and the need for a pluralistic approach, it is important to provide some background information. We will begin by briefly summarizing Blumczynski and Hassani's (2019) findings for readers who may not be familiar with their work. We will then build on their research by presenting additional evidence from translation practice to support the limitations of continuum-based models. Our argument is that, by utilizing various theories within the uncertainty paradigm, we can further demonstrate the inadequacies of continuum-based models and improve our understanding of the uncertainty problem. Each additional theory of uncertainty incorporated into our argument adds depth and explanatory power to our argument.

They start from a critique of bivalence—the tendency to reason in terms of only two mutually exclusive possibilities—which is widespread in most areas of translation research despite a lack of empirical evidence to support it. Translation practitioners and theorists as early as Saint Jerome, through Friedrich Schleiermacher (2021), to as late as Nida (2004), Catford (1965), Newmark (1988), House (1997), Nord (1997), Venuti (2008), and Pym (2014) have all conceptualized translation more or less in bivalent terms. While discounting bivalent reasoning as a reductive and limiting understanding of translation studies, they ask why it has become such a dominant mode of theorizing translation. They trace it to the centuries-old tradition of classical logic that has been the default mode of thinking for the West for much of its history. In this logic, among others, based on Aristotle's law of non-contradiction and law of excluded middle, categories are mutually exclusive: there is no way that a given translation can be both formal and dynamic simultaneously, or for it to be both foreignized and domesticated for that matter. Nevertheless, as our experience with translating a text, however simple, shows, it is virtually impossible to pin down translation with such neat polarizations.

Not that this bivalent reasoning has not been contested. Pym (1995, p. 5) accuses Schleiermacher of suppressing the "living translator" through his proposed binary pair. Chesterman's (1991) treatment of the issue of definiteness vs. indefiniteness in some languages exposes the naiveté of the definiteness/indefiniteness division. These critics further argue that the problem of polarization has traditionally been addressed with continuum-based models. Instead of viewing translation as a polarized dichotomy, we should view it as a continuum: a given translation can be plotted at any point on a continuum. In a continuum-based

model, then, a given translation can be both formal and dynamic or foreignized and domesticated to some degree. This shifts the focus from the either/or paradigm to a both/and or more/less paradigm.

Continuum-based models, however, would solve the problem of bivalent reasoning if translation were a zero-sum concept, the argument goes (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019). A concept is called zero-sum where one aspect of a translation necessarily negates the other, and zero-sum thinking occurs when people focus on the scarcity of a contested resource: the more formal a translation is, the less dynamic it is, and vice versa. On a continuum, motion is invariably linear, going from one direction to the other. The farther you get from one pole, the closer you get to the other, which is precisely the case in zero-sum situations. That a translation that is 20% foreignized is necessarily 80% domesticated is methodologically "not at all different to the Aristotelian requirements of non-contradiction and excluded middle" (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019, p. 338). By conceptualizing translation as a non-zero sum concept and with frequent real-world examples, they show that a given translation can be, say, 25% formal and 35% dynamic (where the sum of the percentages does not necessarily reach 100%) or 65% formal and 70% dynamic (where the sum of the percentages exceeds 100%), all at the same time. This is exactly what continuum-based models will miserably fail to capture.

It is also important to note that, while formal and dynamic equivalence cannot be easily quantified, it is still possible to discuss the degree to which a translation leans towards one or the other. In other words, it is difficult to assign precise percentages or values to formalism and dynamism, yet we can still use these concepts as frameworks to discuss and analyze the choices made by translators. By looking at a translation and evaluating the degree to which it adheres to the source text (formal equivalence) or prioritizes the target audience and context (dynamic equivalence), we can gain a better understanding of the translation strategies used.

Moving Towards a Multidimensional Model

Blumczynski and Hassani (2019) propose a shift away from the traditional one-dimensional view of translation as a continuum, and instead, propose representing it on a coordinate grid where each element of a binary pair can score high or low independently of the other. This approach not only avoids the pitfalls of

zero-sum thinking, but also adds a new dimension to translation theorizing. While two-dimensional models, often invoked through metaphors, such as area, zone, turn, or field fail to fully capture the complexity of translation. Three-dimensional models, as seen in descriptions of translation as thick (Appiah, 1993), rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004), or in the application of the Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005) in translation, provide a more robust framework. However, given the inherent complexity of translation, the authors suggest moving towards a multidimensional model without specifying a particular number of dimensions. Their multidimensional model is “contrastable with numerous oppositions, rather than a single one” (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019, p.342). This solution, combining non-zero-sum reasoning and fuzzy logic, offers a potential alternative to dichotomous and continuum-based models.

However, before going further, we would like to point out that, this paper will not focus on providing a solution to the problem at hand, but rather on examining the potential issues and limitations of continuum-based models. We aim to explore the potential problems and challenges associated with these models in order to shed light on their limitations and potential areas for improvement.

This study employs a qualitative methodology that aimed to provide further reasons for the implausibility of continuum-based models as a solution to the problem of translational bivalence. The study was based on the analysis of four real-world examples of translation from the film industry (*The Father* and *Lost in Translation*) and literature (*L'Étranger* and *And Quiet Flows the Don*). These examples were selected to represent a wide range of translation types, including intersemiotic, audiovisual, and literary. Additionally, these examples were used to illustrate the inadequacies of continuum-based models of translation and to argue for the need for a plurality of uncertainty theories.

In order to avoid interrupting the theoretical discussion with lengthy contextual explanations, essential and relevant information on the examples was provided in advance. The examples were selected based on the availability of the translated texts and their relevance to the research question. A comparative analysis was conducted to identify the areas where the continuum-based models of translation failed to capture the nuances of translation. The findings were then used to argue for the need for a plurality of uncertainty theories. The researchers also

consulted relevant literature in the field of translation studies to contextualize the findings and to further support the arguments made in the paper.

It is also important to note that this study mainly focuses on Nida's formal-dynamic dichotomy and Venuti's foreignization-domestication dyad as proxies for other similar binary opposites. However, we recognize that in doing so, we may have cut a few corners and glossed over many of the finer points and delicate nuances of these dichotomies. To be sure, we do not claim that Nida's formal-dynamic dichotomy or Venuti's foreignization-domestication dyad are the only ways to think about translation; rather, we used them as a starting point for our discussion. In addition, Venuti's translation strategies, namely foreignization and domestication, are often discussed in contrast to each other, as if they are two opposing and distinct approaches. However, Venuti himself does not see them as a dichotomy or a fixed set of options. Nonetheless, the practical application of his strategies often results in an either/or situation, which can be seen as a dichotomy. While Venuti (2008) does not see these approaches as mutually exclusive, in practice, translators often find themselves having to choose between the two. This can result in a dichotomy of sorts, where the translator must decide whether to prioritize the source text's original form and style or to adapt it to the target audience's cultural and linguistic norms.

Real-world Translation Examples

The Father: *The Father* is a 2020 psychological film, co-written and directed by French playwright Florian Zeller. It is an adaptation for the screen of Zeller's 2012 French play *Le Père*, a highly original example of intersemiotic translation based on Jakobson's (2000) classical taxonomy. It is an emotional and sensitive portrayal of the decline of an ailing octogenarian patriarch named Anthony, who must confront the harsh realities of cognitive incapacity and the looming possibility of involuntary institutionalization. The themes of the play, as translated for the screen, correspond to a narrowing of the elderly protagonist's experiential horizons: loss of memory, spatial disorientation, deterioration of social skills, loss of personal autonomy, and dependency on others. One day, he is encountered by a man in his apartment who claims to be the husband of his daughter Anne. Anne appears to her father as another woman when she returns to the apartment. His son-in-law also appears to him as two different men. He also cannot remember moving into

Anne's apartment. Moreover, despite his pathological obsession with his watch, he finds it difficult to keep track of time: An event in the evening still appears to him as an event in the morning. These memory losses, flashes of time looping over one another, and difficulties recognizing people and things are all typical symptoms of creeping senile dementia.

However, the film is intended to be viewed from the perspective of its protagonist, Anthony. Like all successful films, the experience of the viewer is transformative. In this particular instance, the transformation relates to the themes of memory and reality. The film poses a potent challenge to the stability of our mental states as we are left uncertain about the identity of Anne's true husband, the location in which they reside, and even the true identity of Anne herself. Adding to the complexity of the narrative, the role of Anthony is played by the actor Anthony Hopkins, who shares the same birth date as his fictional counterpart, causing confusion as to which Anthony we should focus on in any given scene. The objects and furniture in the apartment undergo subtle yet significant alterations, causing us to question our own sanity and prompting the desire to rewatch the film to confirm our perceptions. Ultimately, the effect on the viewer is a blurring of memories, similar to the disorientation experienced by Anthony.

The purpose of these scenes in the film is to establish an emotional connection with the character of Anthony. Through the use of various narrative techniques, the audience is able to gain an intimate understanding of Anthony's mental state, effectively experiencing his confusion and bewilderment as if it were their own. This skillful manipulation of emotion has been noted by NYTimes critic, Jeannette Catsoulis (2021), who states that "maintaining any kind of emotional distance is impossible."

Mother: According to Ryan Bloom (2012), the translation of just a few sentences into English has proven to be nearly as contentious as the translation of the opening line of Albert Camus's (1942) novel *L'Étranger: Aujourd'hui, maman est morte*. These words are spoken by the novel's protagonist, Meursault, a French settler in colonial Algeria. Meursault is sentenced to death for the murder of an Arab man involved in a conflict with one of Meursault's neighbors. The translation of this seemingly simple French sentence has presented two main challenges. One challenge relates to the translation of the word *maman*, and the other pertains to the

arrangement of the words in the English translation.

To date, four translations of this novel into English have been published. The first was by Stuart Gilbert in 1946, who translated the title as *The Outsider* and the opening line as *Mother died today*. Joseph Laredo and Kate Griffith subsequently undertook a new translation, translating the title as *The Stranger* but retaining Gilbert's translation of the opening line. Finally, in 1988, the American poet Matthew Ward retranslated the novel, keeping the title as *The Stranger* but translating the opening line's reference to *maman* from *mother* back to its original French.

As Bloom (2012), in the website of The New Yorker, presents a compelling argument regarding the importance of the translation of the word *maman* into English.

A large part of how we view and—alongside the novel's court—ultimately judge Meursault lies in our perception of his relationship with his mother. We condemn or set him free based not on the crime he commits but on our assessment of him as a person. Does he love his mother? Or is he cold toward her, uncaring, even? (para, 5)

In Bloom's (2012) view, the use of the term *mother* in the English translation of *The Stranger* does not accurately convey the warmth, attachment, and love that Meursault feels for the woman who gave birth to him in the original novel. Furthermore, he suggests that the use of the word *mommy* in the translation would not be faithful to the original French due to its childish connotations. Instead, Bloom argues that Ward's decision to retain the French word *maman* in the English translation is a clever solution.

The use of the French word *maman* in the novel's opening sentence serves a number of purposes. Firstly, its familiarity in various languages allows for easy comprehension by English readers. Additionally, the retention of the original French word serves to establish a sense of otherness and unfamiliarity in the novel's setting. Finally, the introduction of this foreign word allows for readers to approach it without the preconceived connotations associated with similar words in the English language. This allows for a more objective interpretation of Meursault's relationship with his mother.

However, the correct translation of *maman* does not necessarily guarantee

the accuracy of the entire sentence. The placement of the word *today* at the beginning of the novel holds existential significance, as it reflects both Meursault's worldview and, to a certain extent, Camus's own. Altering the placement of *today* within the sentence would detract from the reader's understanding of Meursault's character.

Throughout the course of the novel, the reader comes to see that Meursault is a character who, first and foremost, lives for the moment. He does not consciously dwell on the past; he does not worry about the future. What matters is today. The single most important factor of his being is right now (Bloom, 2012, para 14).

It is therefore concluded that an accurate translation of the line in question is, "*Today, maman died.*"

Cossacks: Farahmand (2014) demonstrates how the mistranslation of a single word in Sholokhov's acclaimed novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* affects its thematic meaning across multiple translations. The novel chronicles the trials and tribulations of Cossacks in the early 20th century. They are primarily East Slavic people who originated in Ukraine and European Russia. In all three Persian translations of this work, none of which are from the original Russian, Cossacks (كازاكها) has been translated as Kazakhs (قزاقها), a Turkic people in Eastern Europe and some parts of Central Asia. Because these two words refer to two different peoples, the translations can cause unnecessary confusion among readers interested in the novel's historical storyline. It seems strange to them that a Turkic and Muslim people from Central Asia should appear in European Russia, adopt Russian names, be Christian, and have a culture so different from the Kazakhs.

Lost in Translation: *Lost in Translation* is a 2003 movie directed by Sophia Coppola. In this movie, a struggling American actor travels to Japan to make a commercial for Suntory whisky and meets a young American woman whose marriage is falling apart. The two began a romantic liaison that grew out of the shared difficulties of assimilating into Japanese culture. In a funny scene in the movie, the Japanese sections were not subtitled in the US version of the film. During the commercial shoot, the Japanese director gives lengthy and passionate instructions several times in Japanese, none of which the lead actor understands. The director's lengthy, impassioned tirades are invariably translated into short and incomplete sentences in English by a flustered interpreter. On one occasion, for

example, the director's one-minute instructions are simply translated as "He wants you to turn around and look at the camera. O.K.?" to which the actor incredulously replies, "Is that all he said?", hence the title *Lost in Translation*. The director's decision to create a language barrier by not subtitling the Japanese dialogue is a brilliant stroke, as it leaves the non-Japanese-speaking viewer in much the same confusion and loss as the American actor. Subtitling would have made it clear what the actors were saying and thus undermined the central theme of communication breakdowns.

Although framing dichotomies as continua helps us view things via a spectrum rather than two static points, the concept of continua seems to be a kind of multi-headed hydra— every time we think we've pinned down a facet of its nature, another one rears its head. One fundamental flaw in a continuum-based translation model lies in the underlying assumption that the two elements at either end of a continuum have a stable and unambiguous meaning, are diametrically opposed to each other, and can be reached by a particular set of tools. Take Nida's (2004, p. 159) formal-dynamic equivalence continuum as an example. Submission to the linguistic and cultural norms of the source text leads to formal equivalence, while adapting the message of the source text in terms of grammar, lexicon, and cultural references to the linguistic norms and cultural expectations of the receiver leads to dynamic equivalence, which in turn aims at what Nida calls *equivalent effect*. For a translation to achieve an equivalent effect or similar response in receptors, it should have as little foreignness and interference from the source text as possible, and it should have a natural form of expression (regardless of what naturalness really means, of course). However, this model fails to take into account cases, such as the translation of Coppola's *Lost in Translation* or Camus's *Mother*, in which foreign elements, such as unsubtitled Japanese words or original French phrases and word order are retained to achieve a similar response or dynamic equivalence. This problem highlights the limitations of a continuum-based translation model and the need for a more nuanced approach.

Contrary to the belief of those who advocate for the use of binarisms, the elements at the ends of a scale do not have fixed and predetermined meanings. As a result, the techniques used to realize them may vary greatly from one translation to another, such that the techniques used to achieve a certain type of translation in one

case may be the opposite of those needed to achieve its polar opposite in another case. For example, Nida's prescription for achieving dynamic equivalence is to minimize the foreignness and interference of the source text and to make as much linguistic adaptation to the norms of the target language as possible. However, in the case of both *Lost in Translation* and *Mother*, the opposite is true: the more foreign and alienating, the more dynamic and natural the translations are, and the more likely they are to elicit a similar response. This complexity of translation should lead us to avoid predetermined definitions and techniques, and instead let provisional categorizations organically materialize from the analysis at hand (Baker, 2010). For example, lip-synching in dubbing that retains the form of the original is often done in the name of dynamic equivalence.

Additionally, if the Japanese segments had been naturally and freely subtitled, or if Camus's opening line had been translated into natural English, the translations would not be considered dynamic and would not elicit a similar response. However, they would also not fit the definition of formal equivalence, which preserves the formal features of the source text. This highlights the need for a mechanism beyond continua to account for the complexities of translation. Queiroz and Atã (2019) use the framework of complexity science to demonstrate how a translation process can be perceived paradoxically from different perspectives. Blumczynski and Hassani (2019) propose a solution of multidimensionality, suggesting that if a translation is not literal, it does not necessarily mean it is free; rather, it could be liberal, figurative, poetic, spiritual, literary and so on.

Continuum-based translation theories have another notable flaw: their inclination to idealize translations by prioritizing correctness. Incorrect or less accurate translations, straying from this idealized image, often go unnoticed. Even when a translation leans towards foreignizing or domesticating, these theories struggle to explain translations that do not fit these categories due to their inaccuracy. An illustrative instance is found in Mansoor Motamedi's (1998, p. 23) review of Abdorrahim Govahi's translation of Robert Humes's *The World's Living Religions* into Persian, where a misinterpretation humorously distorts the meaning due to formatting constraints. This incident challenges the rigid placement of translations on formal-dynamic continua, highlighting the existence of mistranslations and dysfunctional translations in the realm of translation—a critical

aspect overlooked by many continuum theories. This realization points to a need for a more nuanced understanding that accounts for the complexity and diversity of translation.

Overwhelming evidence from Gestalt psychology (Snell-hornby, 1995) reminds us that a small translation mistake can throw off an entire work because the human mind likes to see the big picture. It forges connections between things and considers the ideas as one large, unified whole. More importantly, because continuum-based models are inherently linear, one-dimensional, reductive, and, in the words of Baker (2010, p. 113), have a “streamlining effect,” they project an illusion of Newtonian clockwork predictability of translation: under certain conditions, such and such states will follow as in linear systems. However, since translation is a nonlinear and complex system, with various factors such as text type, readership, and payment contributing to its emergence, it is virtually impossible to control all conditions and, consequently, to predict the outcome (Atã & Queiroz, 2016; Longa, 2004; Marias, 2015; Marais & Meylaerts, 2019; Marais & Meylaerts, 2022; Pym, 2014; Tymoczko, 2019). Chaos theory, the science of nonlinear dynamical systems and their behavior in the presence of sensitivity to initial conditions, has much to teach us about translation: in a complex system like translation, even slight changes in initial conditions can grow exponentially and lead to markedly different outcomes.

Closely tied to this limitation is that conceptualizing translations as continua risks imposing explicit order. Quantum theorist David Bohm (2002) introduced this term, along with its counterpart, implicate order, to describe different aspects of reality. Explicate order deals in separateness, while implicate order is holistic and mutually enfolding. In the explicate order, A contains B, but within the implicate order, A and B are mutually contained (Peat, 2002, pp. 62–63). This concept is exemplified by a holograph, where each point in the scene is enfolding over the whole, unlike ordinary photography (Peat, 2002, p. 64). Bohm (2002, p. 91) refers to this as “holomovement,” representing movement of everything in relation to everything else, embodying an ongoing process of creation. Holomovement is a multidimensional reality where all things are enfolding and unfolded simultaneously. It is evident in translation or any linguistic act, where an excerpt from a translation mirrors the whole in terms of style, tone, and the translator's approach. The choice of

words or phrases in the translated text aligns with the global objectives, illustrating the implicate order. Maintaining this holistic view in translation is crucial; locally-driven decisions that do not align with global objectives can disrupt the translated text's cohesion, coherence, and style. Translations resemble fractals in chaos theory, forming infinite self-similar patterns across different scales. Each translation iteration involves decisions guided by the original's global objectives and existing translations, resulting in a new iteration of the fractal pattern. This iterative process is ongoing as the translator repeats it. Harding (2019) suggests examining narrative in translation from a complex-theoretical perspective, where a fractal perspective allows analyzing both small and large narratives, recognizing their self-containedness, connectedness, and openness to other narratives.

If the practice of translation itself represents an unbroken whole, and if it also represents what Bohm (1980/2002) calls “universal flux,” i.e., a constant state of process and becoming, why should its analysis and metalanguage be any different? There is little doubt that an organization of translation based on a graded continuum lacks the depth and intrigue necessary to do justice to this chaotic and gestalt-like structure of translation.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of our times is that uncertainty permeates every aspect of our lives. Not only do we now face the kinds of disasters and conflicts that have plagued history, but our day-to-day lives are also shaped by an array of new threats—terrorist attacks, environmental calamities, pandemics, economic upheavals, increasing intolerance, and other evils. Yet one of the greatest sources of uncertainty is not something we can easily identify or measure. The world has never been more interconnected than it is today, but that very fact makes it harder to make sense of what is happening around us. We live in a global village where information flows unimpeded and instantaneously across the planet. The upshot is that we have never had so much information, but we have not necessarily become less uncertain, as our ability to process this deluge remains limited by our ability to understand. In our efforts to make sense of a complex world, we are hampered by the fact that our cognitive abilities have not kept pace with technological advances. In the course of evolution, our brains were developed for an environment where information was scarce and often unreliable; in today's hyper-connected world, they struggle to cope with the sheer volume of data available to us.

We are like fish swimming in a sea of information, unable to process it all. The result is a feeling of overwhelm, confusion, and a growing sense of powerlessness in the face of forces beyond our control.

If we take translation as a reflection of this larger trend, then no single theory of uncertainty—be it fuzzy logic, probability, quantum physics, chaos, or complexity science—seems capable of capturing the full scope of the phenomenon. The truth is that no single theory really does so. Instead, each provides a useful heuristic and parallax view for understanding the human experience of uncertainty in the modern world, but none has achieved the status of a comprehensive theory. However, a pluralistic approach to theorizing in translation that recognizes the limitations of each uncertainty theory while also acknowledging its utility in specific contexts is not so much a form of compromise as a way of thinking critically and creatively about human communication. If we accept that there is no single grand narrative about human communication, then we can resist the temptation to fetishize any particular theory and focus instead on understanding how each contributes to our understanding of the complexities of language use in different contexts. As we saw earlier in this study, a fuzzy-logical approach to the problem of translation continua helped to expose their linear and one-dimensional nature. This was apparently almost all that fuzzy logic had to offer. It did tell us to view translation as a complex network of elements rather than as a series of points on a continuum, but fuzzy logic fails when it comes to giving us a theoretical framework to explain why the sum of values does not necessarily have to reach 100% (30% formal and 40% dynamic, regardless of how these percentages are measured) or why it can exceed 100% (80% formal and 60% dynamic). Then we had to resort to the concept of the zero-sum game, a maxim of game theory. The zero-sum game showed us that in dynamic systems like translation, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In search of a theoretical basis for this assertion, we had to turn to other theories of uncertainty, such as complexity, chaos, Gestalt, and quantum mechanics. Only through a plurality of theories and the ability to draw on a wide range of concepts can we begin to understand the dynamics of translation. Unfortunately, the reality of theorizing and dealing with uncertainty problems in translation studies would paint a very different picture.

Pym (2014) outlines six paradigms that define the field of translation

studies today: Equivalence, Purpose, Description, Localization, Cultural Translation, and Uncertainty. On the paradigm of uncertainty, he cites various theories for dealing with uncertainty. The list includes illumination, consensus, hermeneutics, constructivism, game theory, theories of semiosis, and nonlinear logic, which in turn includes complexity theory, fuzzy logic as partial set membership, and fuzzy logic as simultaneous set membership. However, the number of mentions of each of these theories in *Complexity Thinking in Translation Studies: Methodological Considerations* (Marais & Meylaerts, 2019) is revealing. The volume consists of 12 chapters written by 15 scholars from cultural contexts as diverse as the United States, South Africa, Brazil, and Iran. The volume explores nonlinearity, uncertainty, and complexity in translation without much reliance on any theories other than complexity theory. If we go strictly by the numbers, fuzzy logic appears only once, hermeneutics four times, and semiosis 39 times (31 times in a single chapter on intersemiotic translation); the other theories listed above get no mention at all.

Conclusion and Further Thoughts

In this study, we built on the work of Blumczynski and Hassani (2019) and identified several other reasons for the invalidity and implausibility of continuum-based models as theoretical constructs. To that end, we harnessed the power of multiple uncertainty theories as outlined by Pym (2014). We showed how a plurality of theories could be used to make sense of a phenomenon in a way that is more robust than any one theory alone. The question now arises: what is to become of the binary models and, by extension, the continuum-based models that have reigned supreme in translation studies for so long? Should they be banished from the metalanguage of translation studies?

As mentioned earlier, conceptualizing translation in terms of continua has become so entrenched that it is difficult to shake off, and those who have challenged it have failed to dislodge its hold on translation discourse. Part of the reason lies in the fact that translation researchers have been plagued by a persistent *imposter syndrome*, which despite their best efforts to move beyond bivalent reasoning, creeps into their thinking and writing about translation. The centuries-long dominance of classical logic as their default mode of thinking has led to a deep-

seated dependence on dichotomous thinking that has been passed down to generations of researchers. Because conceptualizing translation in terms of continua is so deeply ingrained in our psyche that it feels natural, even obvious and self-evident, we have been unable to recognize that it is, in fact, an artifact of bivalent reasoning. Moreover, despite all the immanent shortcomings of binary and continuum-based models, they are still indispensable cognitive tools that we cannot do without in any serious theoretical discussion of translation studies. They are convenient mental shortcuts with heuristic and pedagogical applications (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019). We are hardwired to categorize and compartmentalize the world around us, and our minds gravitate toward linear thinking as a coping mechanism against information overload. How can translation be taught without resorting to the time-honored dichotomy of literal vs. free or word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense? The concept of continua comes in really handy in explicating some models of translation. Caroline Mangerel (2019), while critically reflecting on the implications of complexity thinking in relation to knowledge translation and binary oppositions, cannot help but use the word continuum in the title: "Knowledge translation and the continuum of science " (259). In spite of her complexity thinking, which arose largely as a reaction to linear thinking and is almost synonymous with nonlinearity, she still places knowledge translation on the translation continuum of interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic.

Even rejecting binary models sometimes necessitates setting up another binary model (binary vs. non-binary). Just as "complexity thinking is not a binary opposite of reductionism but a meta-position that includes and subsumes reductionism" (Marais, 2021, p. 24), non-continuum models, including Blumczynski and Hassani's (2019) multidimensionality thinking, should be treated as meta-theories that enfold continuum-based models within themselves.

The shift from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican model of the universe, which challenged the geocentric model and introduced the heliocentric model, did not necessitate the abandonment of terms such as sunrise and sunset, and we still use units of hours, minutes, and seconds to measure time, despite the fact that it is a fundamentally relative concept. Similarly, the shift from reductionism to a meta-positional or multidimensional approach should not require the discarding of

continuum models as a means of organizing and structuring our thoughts. (Note that due to space constraints, in this study, we have focused primarily on the reasons for the invalidity of continuum models without proposing a solution or an alternative. We do concur with Blumczynski and Hassani's (2019) multidimensional model as an alternative to continuum-based models.)

However, they are tools that must be used with the utmost care and under continuous critical examination of their limitations. Insufficiently aware of these limitations, some translation theorists and practitioners continue to operate within an outdated paradigm that fails to meet the need for theoretical developments and practical solutions demanded by the 21st-century translation scenario. While it is helpful to simplify concepts so that we can teach them to others, this can cause us to miss the underlying complexity and lead us to wrong conclusions. In our pursuit of simplicity, we sometimes strip out richness and fail to do justice to subtle complexities. The world is a complex place, and the best solutions do not necessarily come in neat packages. The best solutions are often counterintuitive and require us to challenge our assumptions. Therefore, the results of any scholarly research based on these models should not be taken at face value. These studies should tacitly or overtly acknowledge that the cognitive, heuristic, and pedagogical applications of these models are just that and not discourage us from addressing those aspects of translation that do not fit into simplistic binary classifications and continuum-based models.

“If our concepts do not fit reality, we should not adapt reality but our concepts and refuse to choose between binary oppositions” (Marais & Meylaerts, 2019, p. 10). “It is only by refusing to look closely and by willfully ignoring this reeling complexity—and by convincing the reader to do the same—that the scholar can go on pretending to refer his or her reductive binary categories and the 'limits' between them to reality” (Robinson, 2000, p. 20).

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