

Reconsidering the Binaries in Translation Studies

Kobus Marais

University of the Free State

Translation studies has a plethora of binary concepts. Apart from the well-known distinction between source and target text/audience/culture, binaries abound in the way scholars see the process of translation. I here refer to Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence, to Nord's distinction between documentary and instrumental translation strategies and to Venuti's conceptualization of domestication and foreignization as orientations towards difference in translation.

Complexity thinking has recently found its way into translation studies, challenging the reductionist, linear thinking that is pervasive in Western scholarship. One of the assumptions of complexity thinking would be that it is as undesirable to reduce causes to two as it is to reduce them one. None of the work from a complexity perspective has, however, considered the reductionism ingrained in the binaries in translation studies.

In this presentation, I turn to Peirce's triadic thinking as a way to escape binary thinking. I explore Peirce's thinking and his logic in this regard and then see whether it would be possible to conceptualize the binaries in translation studies in triads. I explore the implication of triadic thinking for translation studies and in particular for complexity thinking in translation studies.

The presentation would be conceptual in nature, referring to examples but not offering original data.