This book aims to provide a philosophical underpinning to translation and relate translation to development. The second aim flows from the first part’s argument that societies emerge out of, among others, complex translational interactions amongst individuals. It will do so by conceptualizing translation from a complexity and emergence point of view and relating this view on emergent semiotics to some of the most recent social research. It will further fulfill its aims by providing empirical data from the South African context concerning the relationship between translation and development. The book intends to be interdisciplinary in nature and to foster interdisciplinary research and dialogue by relating the newest trends in translation theory, that is, agency theory in the sociology of translation, to development theory within sociology. Data in the volume are drawn from fields that have received very little if any attention in translation studies, that is, local economic development, the knowledge economy, and the informal economy.

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I dedicate this book to my colleague Jackie Naudé, for never having pulled rank on me.
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According to the well-known African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. Relating this wisdom to my own experience, I have rephrased it: It takes a world to write a book. Apart from the few people I am able to thank by name in this section, my thinking is connected to all of those I have quoted in the book and to many more whose work I have read and who have benefited me with their time and intellect at conferences and during other discussions. Especially when I came toward the end of the writing process, I became increasingly aware of how many people had contributed in various ways.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history of (Western) thought has been characterized by a never-ending swing of the pendulum between a number of basic concepts that have been regarded as mutually exclusive. The most basic of these, I suggest, are change/stability, universal/particular, knowable/unknowable, finite/infinite, singular/plural, necessary/contingent. Thus, the Greeks were already divided on whether reality is changing or unchanging; whether, at its base, it is one or many; whether reality is knowable or unknowable; whether knowledge is universal or particular, finite, or infinite; and whether phenomena are necessary or contingent (Cronin, 2006, p. 11; Stumpf, 1975, pp. 3–113). As far as the current epistemological situation is concerned, what is known as the “modernist” paradigm is usually characterized, roughly, as a system of thought that is biased towards the permanent, universal, knowable, finite, singular, and necessity pole of the binary set. Problems with this kind of thinking have been pointed out and attacked by what has become known as “postmodernism”. In contrast, what is known as the “postmodernist” paradigm is usually characterized, roughly, as being biased toward the changing, individual, unknowable, infinite, plural, and contingency pole of the set of paradoxes. Both of these paradigms are currently being questioned by what could be called a complexity approach.

The relevance of this excursion into philosophy for translation is the following: I contend that one of the problems with conceptualizing translation and translation studies is that it is not done with due consideration of epistemology and the epistemological and/or philosophical assumptions prevalent in thought in translation studies. What I mean is that not enough consideration is given to underlying assumptions about how we know and how the things we study and the knowledge we have about them relate to other things in reality and our knowledge about them; that is, there is not enough of a meta-disciplinary discourse in translation studies. Even James Holmes’s (2002) map does not relate translation studies philosophically to the “larger scheme of things”, except for references to the sciences from which translation studies emerged. Most discussions on translation and
translation studies, notably the discussions on the turns in translation studies, seem to have been conducted from within the field, that is, by means of theoretical considerations, trying to explain translation in terms of yet another of its constituent parts. The ideas have obviously been borrowed from other fields of study, so in that sense, they are not from “inside” the field. What I mean is that translation scholars rarely take a meta-stance or philosophical perspective on their work.

As I understand the philosophy of science (Strauss, 1978, pp. 5–7), the moment you ask the question, “What is science x?” you are no longer engaged in a theoretical discussion within the field of study, but find yourself in a meta-theoretical question concerning what you are doing. You have stepped outside of the boundaries of your field of study, asking meta-questions, which are per definition epistemological or philosophy of science questions. Thus, the question, “What is a square root?” is a mathematical question whereas the question, “What is mathematics?” is not a mathematical question but a philosophy of mathematics question. In the same vein, the question, “What is translation?” or “What is translation studies?” cannot be answered by translation theories, but by meta-theoretical conceptualizations. Let me make clear that I am not looking for neutral ground or a God’s-eye view from which to think about translation. That there are no neutral spaces, I take for granted. However, meta-conceptual thinking is possible (Hofstadter, 1979), and this is where I am heading. Perhaps then, I am not asking, “What is translation?” which could be construed as looking for a typical necessary and sufficient definition. Rather, I am asking how the phenomenon of translation relates to other phenomena in reality and what the implication of this is for translation studies as a scholarly enterprise. I am asking, “What is the relationship of translation with other things?” This chapter aims to conceptualize translation and translation studies meta-theoretically.

This leads to the second problem, namely, that a whole number of philosophical or epistemological assumptions are at work in the efforts to conceptualize translation and translation studies, assumptions that have not, to my knowledge, formerly been analyzed and discussed. One could therefore say that a number of underlying philosophical or epistemological forces that are at work in translation studies shape the way in which the field is developing without the scholars that are involved in these developments reflecting on their own conceptual roots. In terms of the basic paradoxes discussed above, I argue in the following that current approaches in conceptualizing translation studies can quite clearly be located in the postmodernist paradigm and that this bias in conceptualizing translation studies needs to be put on the table for discussion (Simeoni, 2007). I then try to provide a complexity perspective on this bias, suggesting a complexity conceptualization of translation and translation studies that takes serious both constituents of the paradoxes mentioned earlier without dissolving either.
A third problem in conceptualizing translation and/or translation studies is that theorists are attempting to define the object of study. Once again, my understanding of conducting science is that a field of study is not, in the first place, defined by the object of its study but by the angle of its view, its perspective (Strauss, 1978, p. 3; see also the way Latour [2007, p. 257] conceptualizes different fields of study). The reason for this assumption is that its contrary leads to essentialism. If one were able to point out objects of study that were “only” translations or only mathematics or only history, you would end up with a world full of “essential” things, that is, mathematical or translation or historical things. In other words, there are no “pure” translations or translational phenomena in reality. There is reality, from which translation scholars have to decide which aspect they will be considering. This consideration is arrived at by a twofold activity, that is, identifying and distinguishing (Strauss, 1978, pp. 3–4). By this time in the history of science, I assume it general knowledge that reality does not consist of essences but of multifaceted phenomena, that is, phenomena that partake holistically in all of reality. Thus, a common kitchen table is physical, chemical, biological, mathematical, semiotic, historic, and so on. To put it more elegantly, any object in reality takes part in the whole of reality and can therefore be analyzed from a variety of perspectives. Thus, to use the example of mathematics again, mathematicians are not embroiled in a discussion on which phenomena in reality are mathematical phenomena. They study all of reality, but their focus falls on the mathematical qualities of all of reality; that is, they study reality from a mathematical perspective. A particular science can be likened to a pair of glasses that you put on and that determine what you see. So the question will never be, “Is a tree mathematical?” or “Can mathematicians study cars?” The question is, “What is mathematical about trees or cars?” In this vein, I further develop the notion of translation studies by discussing the particular angle from which scholars approach reality in translation studies. I shall thus ask, “What is translational about reality and how could one conceptualize a perspective that will assist you in studying the translation-ness of all aspects of reality?”

In this chapter, I thus intend discussing the question, “How is one to think about translation in a scholarly way?” and “From which perspective does translation studies as a scholarly activity look at reality?” This discussion is part of a very long thread of discussions on the nature of translation and the nature of the field of translation studies, to which I am obviously indebted. It is meant as part of an ongoing discussion in which, to my mind, we are still looking for the right questions to ask. I shall structure the discussion as follows. I start with a discussion in which I analyze the current philosophical underpinnings of translation studies, as I see it. Then I put forward a complexity perspective on translation in which I conceptualize translation in its relationship to other aspects of reality, claiming that translation is an instance of inter-systemic relationships. In particular, I suggest a theory of emergent semiotics as a framework for thinking about translation. The
word *instance* is important here. I am not conceptualizing of translation “as” semiotics. I am rather arguing that translation is an emergent semiotic phenomenon that underlies, in part, the emergence of social reality. Also, I do not try to “define” translation or translation studies but rather consider the conceptual spaces necessary to consider translation or translation studies.

2. AN ANALYSIS OF PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

As indicated previously, this section provides an analysis of recent efforts to conceptualize translation and translation studies. By recent, I mean the recent history of translation studies as a field of study that started with the Second World War (Tymoczko, 2007) and that was conceptualized by Holmes’s famous map in the early 1970s. In my analysis, I attend to the seemingly never-ending series of turns in translation studies, which I read as consecutive efforts at conceptualizing both the object and perspective of translation studies in a reductionist fashion. Second, I turn to the use of metaphor and a number of “translation as” conceptualizations in which I explore further efforts to talk about the object and perspective of translation studies. Third, I turn to Tymoczko’s work as the first effort, to my mind, to propose a meta-theoretical conceptualization of translation. Last, I consider recent conceptualizations of agency in translation studies as another strand of thought in the efforts to conceptualize translation and translation studies. My argument is that all of these efforts, despite their very strong postmodernist epistemological assumptions, turn out to have reductionist tendencies, reducing the complex notion of translation to one of its constituent parts.

2.1 Turns in Translation Studies

The motivation for analyzing the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of translation studies arises, in my opinion, from the current state of affairs in the discipline (Arduini & Nergaard, 2011). In this regard, one could firstly refer to what has generally been termed the turns in translation studies, which have seemingly come to an end. Each turn represents not only a different, and mostly valid, perspective on translation but also a (epistemological) conceptualization of what translation and translation studies is or should be. In these turns, scholars have conceptualized translation in terms of other disciplinary perspectives, for example, linguistics (Nida, 2004), comparative literature (Gentzler, 2008), pragmatics (Hatim, 1997; Hatim & Mason, 1990); culture studies (Bassnett & Lefevre, 1990), sociology (Tyulenev, 2011a, 2011b), ideology studies (Baker, 2006), postcolonial studies (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1990), or history (Simon, 1990). These turns usually meet with one common criticism: They reduce
the complexity of the phenomenon of translation to the particular point of interest of the turn. This has given rise to a situation in which the next scholar to enter the debate needs to proclaim a next turn because he or she is considering an aspect of translation which the previous scholar did not. Referring back to the discussion on a philosophy of complexity in Chapter 2, I do not want to contest any of the turns and the value that they have added to the field. Translation can indeed be studied from the perspective of language or culture or society, and translation scholars have contributed to the understanding of the field as a whole by considering the various parts thereof. Translation is indeed rewriting or indirect speech or representation. Translation can indeed be metaphorically conceptualized as acting, smuggling or cross-acting. What I hope to add is a conceptual space in which to relate these perspectives to one another and within which one could understand why these avenues are taken in the attempts to conceptualize translation. This conceptual space should, to my mind, not only focus on either difference or similarity, as all of the above-mentioned efforts have done. Rather, it should be a conceptualization that continually identifies (similarity) and distinguishes (difference); that is, it maintains a conceptual paradox between aspects of translation. Understanding the interrelationships between the various aspects of translation could assist in creating an understanding of the phenomena with which we are working. It could also assist with the approaches we take in studying them.

If one analyses the turns in translation studies from a philosophical perspective, you find that they all assume a particular perspective from which to study translation phenomena. Now, on one hand, this is the nature of Western science, it cuts off or opens a part of reality and then focuses its attention on that part only (Tyulenev, 2011a, pp. 6–12). However, the problem in translation studies is that, as in most other Western-informed sciences, scholars do not seem to have clarity as to the relationship between the parts under analysis. In other words, one part of scientific work could rightfully be to analyze phenomena, but the other part should be to synthesize the findings, to consider how the parts relate to one another and to the whole. One part of science could constitute the taking apart of the whole and studying the parts, but the next part of science should be to ask about the relationship between parts, the organization of parts into wholes, the links between parts that makes them into a particular whole. Furthermore, philosophically, translation studies scholars seem not to know about or to reflect on how these perspectives relate to one another. What is it that keeps these different perspectives together in one field of study? Why is it possible to study translation from so many different perspectives? It is true that the object of study is multifaceted, but it is also true that the field of study is one. So the one and the many should be kept in paradoxical juxtaposition in a complex conceptualization because choosing the one above the other implies a mutilation of reality (Morin, 2008). The field of translation studies has clearly brought the diversity of the field to the fore. It seems time now to
relate that diversity to unity without sacrificing either or lending primacy to one or the other. This is attempted in Section 3 of this chapter.

2.2 Metaphors

Metaphorical thinking has become part and parcel of the efforts to conceptualize translation. The drive in this approach is motivated by two arguments. The first is, based on Lakoff’s work, to argue for the conceptualizing power of metaphors (St. André, 2010a, 2010b, pp. 1–8). In this kind of argument, metaphors constitute the way human beings think and create new knowledge, sometimes going so far as to claim that it is the only way. The second argument is that, in the history of science, one finds sufficient examples of metaphors having been used to conceptualize new developments in various fields of study. Examples from physics, chemistry, and biology are usually provided as proof for this argument.

Underlying the search for metaphors in the conceptualization of translation seems to be the agreement amongst translation scholars that a sufficient and necessary definition of translation is neither possible nor necessary. Based on this argument, these scholars seem content to conceptualize translation metaphorically. For example, Hermans (2007) views translation “as” indirect speech, as does Gutt (2000). Tymoczko (2007) herself views translation “as” representation, transmission, and transculturation, or to be more precise, she frames translation as these three things. Bandia (2008) views translation “as” reparation, and Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) as well as Bassnett and Bush (2006) conceptualize it “as” writing or rewriting.

In a recent attempt to explore the role of metaphors in translation, St. André (2010a) brought together a number of thought-provoking articles in which translation scholars have attempted to “think through translation with metaphors”. According to him, metaphors are commonly used in the development of a field of study and to conceptualize new theories (St. André, 2010a, p. 7). The question is, however, whether the use of metaphor can be maintained in the conceptualization of a theoretical or meta-theoretical discourse without developing a theory with which to conceptualize it (Tyulenev, 2010). In all other fields of study, the metaphor actually acts as some kind of trigger in the conceptualization process, but then the metaphor, or actually the insight mediated by means of the metaphor, is theorized. In the case of translation studies, it seems to me that many scholars expect of the metaphor to become the theory. Thus, Van Wyke (2010) conceptualizes translation as clothing, a cover that allows the invisible body behind it to be best appreciated. Benshalom (2010, p. 48) conceptualizes translation as acting, as someone speaking what someone else has written. St. André (2010b) himself conceptualizes translation as cross-action, pretending to be something that you are not. Heniuk (2010) explores the metaphor of translation as squeezing a jellyfish, and Tyulenev (2010) conceptualizes translation as smuggling. Although it is true that one could conceptualize of translation
as any of the preceding, the questions are, Why? What makes it possible? Is it not a fact that all of these different conceptualizations have something in common? On what basis do all these different metaphors make sense? Returning to the introduction, is the varying nature of metaphorical conceptualizations not based on the sameness of something that is common to all of them? In postmodernist fashion, these metaphors keep on deferring the meaning of the notion of translation, relating it to some other notion. While the logic of difference has been made clear, at times one needs to draw boundaries, though contingent and temporary, to these deferral processes because you have to act (Cilliers, 2005, pp. 263–264). So, although this deferring process is legitimate and can continue, it is equally necessary to come to some tentative understanding of what we are talking about. This tension—between deferring and settling—I argue, exists at the edge of chaos, not in some kind of equilibrium.

The preceding conceptualizations also raise another question: Why is language never conceptualized as acting, that is, the other way round? And it raises a further question: Why is acting never conceptualized as language? In other words, why the need in translation studies to think of it in terms of something else? And what makes it possible? And why not go straight to the problem to ask, “What is translation?” One reason, among a legion others, could be that translation studies has tried and is trying to define the object of study rather than the perspective of the field of study. I suggest in the following that both should be performed.

Another problem here seems to be that using metaphor to conceptualize translation is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Scholars with an interest in drama will inevitably conceptualize translation as acting; that is, it is an easy and uncritical (and also reductionist) assertion of similarity. Why does nobody in translation studies ask about the difference between translation and rewriting or acting or smuggling? Defenders of the position may argue that everybody knows that there is a difference. Fine, but by continuing, book after book and article after article, to conceptualize translation as similar to basically anything in reality is constitutes only one half of what our task involves. We also have to ask what is different, that is, unique based on similarities, about translation.

Tyulenev (2010) and Guldin (2010) thus both argue along the lines I am indicating here, that the metaphors in themselves cannot be regarded as theories but have to be theorized. Guldin (2010, p. 168) rightly indicates that any use of metaphor to conceptualize a new theory is reductionist in nature as there is usually only one point of comparison which is developed. In particular, he (Guldin, 2010, p. 176) theorizes translation as the simultaneous co-presence of both sides, the source and the target—similar to metaphor. Thus, one has to conceptualize a theoretical space in which the complexity and variety of metaphors can be accommodated. As with translation, metaphor deals with change based on stability, foreignness based on similarity (Guldin, 2010, p. 174). This means that both metaphor and translation
embody a paradoxical logic, both deal with relating systems, with boundaries, with crossing borders, and with inter-ness. If one considers all the metaphors explored in St. André’s collection and the other metaphors discussed previously, it appears that two aspects emerge on a theoretical level. The first is the ability to relate two things to one another in a paradoxical way that creates new meaning, be that two words or two texts and be that in the same language or in two different languages. Conceptualizing this idea systemically, one could argue that the nature of semiotic phenomenon is that they “inter” between two systems, paradoxically holding to both systems. These are the metaphors of clothing and smuggling and cross-acting. It is the carryover idea; that is, something changes and something remains stable. The second is the idea of being able to represent what has been said in numerous ways. This is reported speech, representation, and acting. It also relates to the metaphors of translation as reported speech, rewriting, and representation. Once again, something changes and something remains stable.

I contend here that these metaphors all refer to aspects of the nature of semiotics. First, whether we like it or not, form and meaning can be distinguished, though not separated, contrary to both modernism and postmodernism. From a complexity perspective, this is yet another of the famous binaries of Western thought. Let us assume, as the complexity theorists suggest, that form and meaning exist in a nonequilibrium system at the edge of chaos. This means that the exact relationship between the two cannot be predicted and can be explained with laws of probability only. Claiming, as modernity does, that form and meaning are clearly separable and that meaning can be “extracted” from form without much ado and claiming, as postmodernity does, that meaning cannot be divulged from form at all are both reductionist enterprises. Somehow, some aspect of meaning can change in form and, by some means, can retain a resemblance of itself. Note the repeated use of “some”. Somehow, you can say something and I can tell someone else what you have said, using other words, and the two utterances still bear a resemblance to one another. This is the nature, not of translation, but of semiotics. It is similarity based on change and, paradoxically, change based on similarity. It is presence based on absence and absence based on presence.

Another problem with the use of metaphors in translation studies is of a methodological nature. Martín De León (2010), Heniuk (2010), Guldin (2010), and Monti (2010) all seem to employ an ethnographic methodology by looking at how translators and the public conceptualize translation. The same impetus underlies Tymoczko’s (2006, 2007) attempts to explore words used for translation in general language and in various cultures in order to come to a better understanding of translation. Note again, that ethnographic studies focus on the local and difference, which forms part of the epistemological paradigm currently dominant in translation studies. Although the approach itself is valid, the way in which it is used in
Translation studies poses at least two problems. The first is that the scholars conducting ethnographic studies on notions of translation usually commit the first sin in the ethnographic table of commandments; that is, they criticize the layperson for having a particular point of view, or they present a different view of translation (see in particular Heniuk, 2010, p. 145; also Latour, 2007). This is similar to early anthropologists calling the people on which they were reporting “barbaric”. To my mind, if one wants to use an ethnographic methodology in translation studies, you cannot use it in the service of your own ideological stance, that is, to “de-Westernize” or “de-modernize” concepts of translation. You have to regard the local in terms of its own values. I cannot see the use of doing ethnographic work if one is not to take serious the local views or if you merely study ethnographically concepts that strengthen your own theoretical point of view. I am therefore not sure whether lay views on translation can be used to conceptualize the field of study. Ethnography is aimed at understanding what the other thinks and does in a particular context. Turning those local conceptualizations into an international theory seems be an extreme case of “translating” the other into the self, as Sturge (2007) has argued.

The second problem with these ethnographic approaches seems to me that at least some of them perform the etymological fallacy. They look at the “original” meaning of words without taking the history of its evolution into account. No word can be said forever to have had the same meaning. This fallacy was committed quite often in New Testament studies when the so-called original meaning of New Testament words was excavated from the classical Greek, ignoring the fact that meaning in Koine Greek, a later version, differed from that in classical Greek. In the case of translation studies, can one claim that the meaning lies in the word or is the meaning in the practice, whichever word was chosen for it? To quote Shakespeare, if we called translation anything else, would we do it differently? Tymoczko (2007), for instance, argues, based on the meaning of Igbo words, that translation is conceptualized as narration. The question is, however, not what the Igbo chose as their word for translation but how they translate, or more importantly, how they translated? This immediately brings history into play. In Setswana, a South African Bantu language, the word for translation is the same word that is used for turning something over (Molefe, 2011), and in Xitsonga, another South African Bantu language, the word used also includes explanation (Mapengo, 2011). This does not mean that Setswana-speaking or Xitsonga-speaking translators currently translate differently to English-speaking translators because they use a different word for the action of translating. It may just be that they have been confronted with a new phenomenon, written translation, and chose a word that carried the intended meaning—changing something while keeping it the same. Claiming more than merely this seems overkill to me logically, etymologically, and historically. What would render valuable insight is if one could consider the historical development of translation practices (and for that
matter terminology) in a particular culture, as Quoc Loc (2011) did in the case of Vietnamese. It is the only way in which one could argue for or against the influence of Western-dominated practices in translation.

Theorizing these notions, one thus has to move to the meta-question: What do all these metaphorical perspectives have in common? To my mind, they share the commonality that they all refer to features of semiotics. As indicated in Chapter 3, semiotics is the human ability to represent one thing as another, that is, \(a \text{ as } b\). It is the human ability to conceptualize change based on similarity and similarity based on change. To be able to function semiotically, one has to be able to see difference based on similarity, and you have to be able to hold this paradox and not dissolve it. To be able to function semiotically, the thing you are representing, which is usually absent, has to be related to something different, which is put in the place of the first, and based on this ability, you have to be able to relate the absent and the present. You do it based on being able to see similarity and difference. You know that the sign is not the thing and the thing is not the sign, but you simultaneously know that they are related, you set up ties or links between them without claiming identity. They only work if you can hold on to the paradox of similarity and difference. This similarity/difference can relate to semiotic medium (i.e., language to film), or to space (i.e., from here to there), or to time (i.e., from now to then) or for any other conceivable category.

As a comment aside, one then has to acknowledge that other fields of study may find translation helpful as a metaphor. The typical lamentations in this regard, that is, that “it is diluting our field”¹, cannot hold in the face of the way in which translation studies itself makes use of metaphors.

I conclude by pointing out that, to my view, the efforts at conceptualizing translation through metaphor constitute yet another one-sided, postmodernist epistemological effort. Metaphors are preferred because they valorize the local (Tymoczko, 2010, p. 112), which falls within the postmodernist biases of my initial philosophical analysis. It focuses one-sidedly on the local, the contingent, the irrational or unknowable (continually deferring the fixing of meaning) by using the very individuality of metaphor formation to theories of translation. What is epistemologically interesting, however, is that it maintains the modernist undercurrent of reductionism, by thinking about translation in terms of its constituent parts and not in terms of the relationship between the parts.

If one asks the question as to why turns and metaphors and “translation as” definitions are possible and popular, the theory I am espousing explains it because of the semiotic nature that all these features share. Translation can be such as language, or literature, or metaphor (Heniuk, 2010, p. 168) because all of these phenomena share the fact that they are semiotic phenomena. The one mistake would thus be to reduce translation to any of these because then you would only focus on similar characteristics, ignoring the differences between them. For instance, it may be true that translation is like cross-acting, but it is also not. Thus, a metaphorical conceptualization of
translation needs to theorize both the similarities and the dissimilarities of the comparison.

Put simply, why can we not view translation “as translation”, or what would it take to come to such a view? Do we ever consider the point that philosophy does not use other disciplines to define itself? Or that nobody would claim that sociology is actually “just” a form of philosophy? Philosophers would claim that philosophy is philosophy, full stop! Do we ever consider the fact that, philosophically speaking, we have a unique phenomenon to study, a phenomenon that emerges out of other phenomena but is not reducible to any one or all of those phenomena? Translation scholars seem nonplussed by the fact that they borrow conceptual material from nearly all other fields of the humanities, for example, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, literary theory, critical theory, and pragmatics. They seem to be comfortable with the fact that the use of these differing fields of study is done without theorizing on the implications thereof. Is it just a matter of “plurality goes”, or is translation a phenomenon of such a nature that it has to be explained by a multitude of substrata, that is, by way of complexity theory? I am not questioning the fact that translation scholars use other fields of study but rather the fact that they do not conceptualize this use.

To my mind, what makes translation difficult to define is not only its cultural multiplicity or fracturedness, although that does play a role. To my mind, translation is difficult to define because it is a complex phenomenon. Why is it possible for translation scholars to write chapters and books about translation as culture, as diplomacy, as politics, as language, as indirect speech, as ecology, as literature, as history, and/or as system? I argue that these are possible because translation is all these things, because language is all these things or, rather, because semiotics as a subsystem of social reality makes possible all these phenomena and constitutes them. Social reality is construed by means of symbolic interaction, that is, semiotic interaction, and thus, politics has a semiotic substratum, law has a semiotic substratum, history has a semiotic substratum, and so on. If one does not want to go the route of reductionism, you then have to conceptualize a framework within which you can think about translation as the multi-semiotic vehicle for all these phenomena. In this sense, it is an inter-phenomenon, which operates on the process of the creation of social phenomena. It does so by inter-ing between systems, be that vertically between the biopsychological and the social, or horizontally between, say, legal and economic systems (see the discussion and the figures presented in Section 3.1 of this chapter).

2.3 Cluster Concept

To my mind, Tymoczko (2002, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013) has gone the furthest in her efforts to conceptualize translation. In the process, she has tried, particularly, to engage the positivist and reductionist assumptions underlying
translation studies. I first discuss her seminal insights and then argue that one could go even further, both conceptually and epistemologically.

Let me first point out that, to my mind, Tymoczko is an excellent example of the postmodern strand of thinking to which I pointed at the beginning of the chapter. I am not trying to label or box her in, but I am trying to engage with the epistemological assumptions at work in the conceptualization of translation. Early on in her book (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 16), she starts by claiming that scholars are trying to understand and gain knowledge of life, with life conceptualized as “lived and experienced in a multi-centered manner”. The reference to “multi-centered” indicates her deep belief in particularity, multiplicity, and contingency as founding concepts for understanding reality. In line with her assumptions, she then proceeds by showing how linguistic, literary and cultural efforts have been made at a definition of translation (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 52). What her approach gains on earlier approaches, and where she comes close to the complexity perspective which I am proposing here, is that she holds together complex paradoxes in her argument that translation is an interdiscipline. She proposes a dialogic and multi-perspective position on translation (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 53). In her estimation, the complex nature of the concept of translation causes the complex nature of the field of study (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 53). Although I do agree on the complexity of translational phenomena, I do not agree with her efforts at conceptualizing a field of study on the basis of an object of investigation only. As I have indicated, fields of study are primarily conceptualized in terms of the perspective they hold on reality. For instance, a translated text also has physical and chemical properties that the physicist and the chemist will study, not the translation scholar. Looking for something in reality that can be called “translation” seems to me only part of what we need to be doing. What we also need to do is what, for instance, the founders of literary science did. As they tried to conceptualize literariness, translation scholars need to try to conceptualize translation-ness. The same holds true for the founders of sociology: They tried to conceptualize social-ness (Tyulenev, 2011a). In the same vein, I suggest that translation studies will not progress toward a conceptualization of the field unless it asks, “What is translation-ness?” Once it has asked that question, it could go Tymoczko’s route toward an inductive conceptualization of features of translational objects. This is discussed further later in this section.

In an effort to “enlarge translation”, that is, to open up a conceptual space within which to theorize translation wider than is currently the case, Tymoczko points out a number of problems with the current efforts at defining translation. She (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 78) argues that the typical reductionist way of defining a concept, that is, by finding necessary and sufficient conditions that would cover all instances of a phenomenon, does not suffice in the case of translation. The reason why reductionist definitions are not adequate in all instances is the complexity of social or cultural concepts. She argues convincingly that culture acts as a fragmentary factor
to fragment the practices and products of translation to such an extent that one is unable to define it, and therefore, she proposes, one should conceptualize of translation as a cross-cultural concept (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 79). She asks, “Is it possible to conceptualize translation without retreating to a culturally chauvinistic and limited point of departure for theory or to a prescriptive stance for practice, both of which reject the cultural production of other peoples” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 83)? Although she rightfully points to the fragmented nature of translational processes and products, I think she is biased toward the contingent in a way that fragments reality more than is necessary. I am thus asking whether reality is as fragmented as she portrays it and whether her assumptions presuppose this fragmentation.

To solve her problem with defining translation, she turns to concept formation to try to understand how one could think about complex concepts such as translation (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 84). According to her, the concept “translation” is related to the category of translations and the category of activities that produce translations. Where she decidedly moves toward a complexity perspective is when she claims that nonlinearity underlies the inconsistent and contradictory practices of translation phenomena (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 84). She suggests that one should turn to relational thinking rather than essentialist thinking when considering complex cultural concepts, something to which complexity scholars would only agree, but not only for cultural phenomena—for all complex phenomena. She claims that translation cannot be defined reductively, that is, in terms of features or parts that predict the whole. Although translation is based on language (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 85), one finds partial and overlapping similarities between translation phenomena that relate to differences in time and place. Note again her emphasis on difference.

Tymoczko bases her work on that of Wittgenstein (1958), who argued that notions such as language or game do not have one feature in common in all instances. Rather, all instances of the notion are somehow related (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 84). She (Tymoczko, 2007, pp. 84–85) then uses the term cluster concept, i.e. concepts that do not lend themselves to definition in a reductionist fashion or concepts that are conceptualized by viewing them as a family. The way to conceptualize these phenomena, for example, game, tool, translation, is to describe the resemblances between them, just as one would do with a family. (Note, as an aside, that Wittgenstein formed his notion of family resemblances before the availability of detailed genetic knowledge, which may, these days, indeed lead to the ability to provide a necessary and sufficient definition of a family, or at least some families and family relationships.) Cluster concepts, as Tymoczko calls them, would thus show similarities or resemblances without certain features necessarily occurring in all instances, i.e. being necessary and sufficient. These similarities sometimes lie in the detail and sometimes in the overall structure and cannot be defined a priori, but can only be described a posteriori. One can thus not define translation; one can only describe the similarities or relationships

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between translation phenomena. Note the preference for the bias towards unknowability and change/difference; that is, each instance is different.

From Wittgenstein, Tymoczko borrows the notion of game as a cluster concept or a concept the instances of which are related by family resemblances (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 85). As Wittgenstein (1958) argued, these concepts can be conceptualized not by deductive definition but by pointing to phenomena and saying, “This and all things like it are x.” She also explores the notion of emergence, without calling it that, in the example of fiber which seems to be one thing but which is actually made up of a number of thinner fibers (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 85). The aim in this kind of concept formation is not to look at something that these phenomena have in common, but at some similarities between them or at the relationships that obtain between them. Membership of clusters is not a matter of logic (note the preference for irrationality) but of practice and use, emerging, to use complexity nomenclature, out of the practice of social interaction. In her argument, Tymoczko poses an empirical approach, that is, Wittgenstein’s “do not think, look” over against a theoretical or deductive approach. Does one detect a measure of empiricism in her argument? I do think so, because it suits her focus on difference, the particular and the contingent. Thus, translation can only be conceptualized a posteriori and not in an a priori way.

To my mind, Tymoczko (2007, p. 84) then takes a huge leap forward by arguing that translation is a “complex cross-cultural concept”. Tymoczko does not clarify the notion of complexity, but I suggest that her notion of a cluster concept is related to what is seen as a complex concept in complexity theory. In other words, it is a concept that is explained by nonlinear logic, that is, sensitivity to original conditions and nonlinear causal relationships between input and output. This means that translation is a complex phenomenon, emerging out of substrata, and knowledge of which cannot assist in explaining or predicting the whole. She does, however, make use of the concept of categories, calling translation a category that includes all the translations found around the world. She does not attempt to conceptualize the category, which is what I hope to do in Section 3. She further argues that one finds a category of activities that produces translations. With this move, she avoids a reductionist definition and opts for a pragmatic definition, not “thought” but “seen”. In her view, translation is a pragmatic quality and is to be defined pragmatically. She further grounds translation in cultural practice, which she also argues is a family type of phenomenon. It has similarities with other cultural phenomena but, being cultural, is contingent.

I see the seeds of emergence as already sown in Tymoczko’s work. I thus first want to argue how her views are emergent, and then I want to build on her argument for a more adequate theory of emergence. First, Tymoczko claims that one finds a category of activities all over the world that “produce” translations. Various, that is, a complexity of, activities thus result in a (relatively) simple phenomenon, recognized as translation all over. Second, she argues that translation is based on language. This is the typical language
of emergence. In fact, I argue that translation emerges out of a number of substrata, which are each culturally contingent. The notion of cluster concept itself presupposes an emergent way of thinking. It refers to a concept with a complexity of underlying forms and practices resulting in one phenomenon. Lastly, Tymoczko refers to cluster concepts that are not based on fixed features, that is, essences, but on holistically structured activities. In emergence theory, the superstrata subsume the substrata in a holistic way.

Tymoczko’s work holds a number of implications for my project. She has opened the possibility for moving away from reductionist definitions of translation. She has opened the space for meta-theoretical conceptualizations about translation as a complex phenomenon, which she calls “a puzzling philosophical matter” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 88). Again, this is the point at which I would like to take up the baton and enter into a dialogue with her about un-puzzling the issue philosophically or meta-conceptually. Lastly, she has opened up the space for conceptualizing translation in terms of emergence because she conceptualizes it as arising out of “practice and usage”. I do not claim that she was thinking about emergence, but I argue that the implication of the way in which she conceptualizes translation, in fact, assumes some notion of emergence.

In analyzing Tymoczko’s move toward conceptualizing translation studies as a cluster concept, I contend that it is no accident that she bases her work on Wittgenstein. He is a very interesting philosophical figure. On one hand, he has strong rationalistic tendencies, but he is not a universalist. One would be able to call him an individualist rationalist, which is what makes him a precursor to postmodern thought. Thus, he fits Tymoczko’s program like a glove, having enough rationality to be scientific and enough individualism to be postmodern. In this sense, one could argue that it is not translation that is necessarily thus defined, but Tymoczko’s conceptual framework. She cannot but define translation the way she has done, not because that is the nature of the phenomenon, but because that is the scope that her conceptual frame of reference allows her. In the end, valuable as her insights are, they are skewed toward the particular, the infinite, the many, the unknowable, the changing, the contingent, and difference, that is, the postmodern. To come to a less-skewed understanding of translation, one has to juxtapose her conceptual framework with the “other side”, that is, a more deductive approach, in a complex way to be able to deal with the full array of complexities concerning translation.

The second problem with her conceptualization is that she is not able to relate translation to the rest of reality in a philosophical way. Although she rightfully argues in favor of interdisciplinarity, she conceptualizes how translation relates to other phenomena in reality and how one would conceptualize it as a field of study. This relates to a third problem in her thought. She may be able to indicate phenomena that are part of the family of translational things in reality. However, this does not yet allow her to conceptualize the field of translation studies in a logical way. Unless one is able to motivate
the perspective of your field of study, i.e. the lens through which you look at reality, I contend that you have not yet conceptualized a field of study.

What I shall thus attempt in Section 3 is to propose a deductive way of conceptualizing translation and translation studies with a focus on the general, the finite, the one, the knowable, the stable, the necessary, and similarity. My argument is that, to conceptualize the field of study, that is, the perspective taken in translation studies, my conceptualization is sufficient. Paradoxically, to conceptualize the object of study, Tymoczko’s conceptualization suffices. Together, in a complex paradox, our views present a framework for thinking about, researching, and teaching translation and translation studies.

2.4 Agency

The newest developments in translation studies globally have one thing in common: the agency of translations/translators (Cronin, 2007). Testimony to this is the work of leading scholars such as Pym (1998) on translation history, Bandia (2008) on translation as reparation in the African context, Baker (2006) on the narrative nature of translation in contested situations, Hermans (2007) on translation as reported speech, Tymoczko (2007) on the conceptualization of translation studies and the agency of translators, and Gentzler (2008) on translation as an agent in the creation of identities. One also finds edited collections such as that of Baker (2010); Bührig et al. (2009); Milton and Bandia (2009); Munday (2007, 2012); St. André (2010a); St-Pierre (2007); and St-Pierre and Kar (2007). The reader can also refer to Singh (2007) and Trivedi (2007) for contrary views. In this section, I intend analyzing this development in translation studies as part of the problem of conceptualizing translation and translation studies, arguing with Tyulenev (2011a) that translation studies needs to think deeper about agency and its relationship to the social.

When one talks about agency in translation, you are, to my mind, talking about the relationship between translation and the social or cultural (Dasgupta, 2007; Latour, 2007). (I follow Searle [2010] here in my use of the terms social or social reality or social phenomenon here without any distinction between social and cultural—which are contested anyway.) When you talk about agency, you are asking how individual actions cause other individual or social actions, which is a question concerning the influence of the agent on social reality, that is, on other agents (Milton & Bandia, 2009b, pp. 1–16). Obviously, one has two phenomena to deal with here, that is, the individual and the social. Although it is true that one could study agency from the perspective of the individual psyche or individual ethics (see volume 5, issue 1 of the journal *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*), once you ask questions about the cause and effect of agency, you are into the realm of the social. In keeping with the complexity stance I have taken in Chapters 1 and 2, individual agency and the social cannot be separated. In
what follows, I analyze the ways in which translation scholars currently conceptualize this intricate relationship between the individual and the social. My argument is that translation studies assumes rather than argues a causal link between individual action and social system and that the field can benefit from conceptualizing agency from a complexity perspective. Second, I argue that translation studies, because of its individualistic and critical studies bias, is not able to theorize translational action in which there is no clear intent towards agency. In other words, I do not think that translation studies scholars have thought deeply enough about agency, that is, how to get someone to do something (Latour, 2007, p. 58).

Wolf (2011) claims that the background of a sociological turn in translation is the changing production background, that is, globalization. This is also the view of Cronin (2006), who conceptualizes the role of translation in identity formation against the background of the forces of globalization (see also Heilbron, 2010). Schäffner (2010) argues that, with globalization, the world media is a point of interface for the languages of the world and thus a rich point to study to understand translation. These scholars are thus interested in the relationship between translatorial action and social systems, and their interest goes both ways, that is, how the agent influences the system and how the system influences the agent (Chesterman, 2006; Pym, 2006, pp. 24–25). Milton and Bandia (2009a) conceptualize agency in terms of innovation and change, that is, the process of modernization. Although they offer a number of case studies in support of their claim for the agency of translators, their theorization is not all that extensive (see Tyulenev, 2011a, p. 3). Except for reference to Bourdieu, and that through a secondary source, I find no theorization of the data in terms of sociological theory. These scholars may argue that it is not necessary, because they look instead at theories of patronage and power (Milton & Bandia, 2009b, p. 2–8). The problem is that the claims of authors in the collection all relate to sociopolitical change. How can one make valid claims concerning these phenomena if you do not theorize your data from the perspective of social and/or political theory? For instance, in most of the case studies presented in the book, influential agents or influential texts are chosen as data for the case studies. This does not solve the question as to how to account for the large number of texts translated everyday by anonymous “agents of translation” who may have very little intention concerning agency beyond earning a living. As long as the agency theories of translation studies cannot account for the latter, we still have a biased field of study.

Susam-Sarajeva (2006) considers the travel of ideas and the influence this exerts on the development of a society. What makes her work so valuable is that she theorizes the data in terms of sociological theory. She uses travel theory to explain what happens when ideas travel (Susam-Sarajeva, 2006, p. 7–12). The gain of her insights is that one does not have to study a particular translator and that one does not have to assume particular intentions on her part to argue for a causal relationship between translations
and social effects, that is, the travel of ideas. Combining her ideas with theories on memes in complexity theory (which explain the transfer of social information by means of memes analogously) to the transfer of biological information by means of genes should render new insights in the role of translation in the travel of ideas.

Bandia (2008) offers another example of a scholar who theorizes his conceptualization of agency (reparation) theoretically, that is, in literary theory. Although one-sided in the sense that he does not consider nonliterary translation, he deals with the complexities and hybridity of African literary writing in European languages. One of the contributions of his study, which has not really been taken up, is the “internal translation” he assumes in the psyche of the author who translates from the home language into a foreign language before he writes. What is even more far-reaching is the notion that turning African oral rhetoric into Western novels can be seen as a form of translation. This is inter-semiotic translation par excellence, and it theorizes the agency of the translator in crossing borders, not only of language but also of other semiotic systems.

Baker’s (2006) work on translation and conflict has become somewhat of a classic in the field. Contesting the conventional notion that translation bridges gaps and mediates, she argues that translation is used to reconfirm the own narrative, that is, the self. Using narrative theory, she argues that the world is one great conflict, with no neutral ground and no way to understand the other (Baker, 2006, p. 1; see, for instance, Spivak’s [2007] argument for listening in translation to transcend the divide between self and other). Perhaps the most important point Baker raises is that translation could have an inherently conservative drive. Looking back at the history of apartheid in South Africa, in particular at the founding of the South African Translator’s Institute that followed, in 1956, on the rise to power of the National Party, Baker’s fears of translation as self-justificatory action are not unfounded. It could be an action that is meant to keep people safely in their own comfort zone (as I shall argue again in Chapter 5). Although she certainly has a point concerning the possible conservative nature of translation (Baker, 2006, pp. 162–163), her work raises a number of important epistemological questions for translation scholars to consider. First, I contend that her conceptualization of narrative is that of a closed system, which is immune to influence from outside and which therefore makes cooperation impossible (Axelrod, 1984; Lewis, 2007). In her view, there is no room for growth in social reality because everybody lives securely in their own narrative. There is only room for conflict and no mediation. Self-legitimization is the only function of translation. Although claiming a postmodern epistemology, Baker seems to be stuck in a reductionist frame of thought by reducing translation to one of its aspects, that is, maintaining conflict. Although she senses the problem, she is not able in the last chapter of her book to provide a perspective on the reductionist stance she has taken. Yes, she is correct in arguing that even reason is already value laden (Baker, 2006, p. 142), but
why should one even consider the opposite? By this time in the history of thought, we should all know that there is no safe space. The issue is not whether there is some value-free rationality out there, but how we move forward in a world in which there is only ideology (Barnett, 2003).

This is where complexity theory asks us to consider more than one perspective. First, humans are not only caught up in their own narratives, but they also have the ability to meta-narrative thinking or self-reflexivity (Axelrod, 1984; Hofstadter, 1979; Simon, 2007). A complex conceptualization should thus consider the human condition as both caught up in narratives and able to transcend narratives, at least in principle. An example to show that people are able to transcend their own narratives may be found in the choices of Nelson Mandela in the South African transition to a democratic system. Second, Baker’s position could be described as one of strong constructivism. The consequences of her thoughts are exactly that of strong constructivism. If there is no shared reality outside of my consciousness and/or culture and/or narrative, then, yes, we have only conflict. In my explanation of complexity theory, I have, however, indicated that we live in one world, a physical-chemical-biological-psychological-social world. If one separates the psychological world from the social or physical world, it becomes easy to think in terms of constructivism. However, if the atoms in your body and in mine are kept together by the same physical forces, if we share the same chemical substances, if we share 99 percent of the same genes, is it so easy to claim that we each construct our own world? Do we not have to take cognizance of the fact that we are also constructed? As I understand it, this is the claim of sociologists, that is, that social reality constrains (constructs?) human possibilities just as physical reality does it. Also, if we consider the social and its constraints on our being, are we not also socially constructed? Furthermore, is constructivism not a particularly Western philosophy, and does it not arise from an ideological stance where people think that they have conquered nature? Are people living in abject poverty or extreme heat or cold able to hold to constructivist theories? I am well aware that constructivism is, in part, a response to essentialist tendencies in social thought. In this case, apartheid was one of the results of such essentialist thought. However, denouncing essentialism or natural determinism in social relationships does not have to lead to the other extreme, strong constructivism. I am thus questioning the radical forms of constructivism that are currently rife in translation studies. A more ecologically sensitive model, such as the one that I have suggested in Chapters 1 and 2, is more tuned to the complexity of the human condition.

In Muñoz-Calvo and Buesa-Gómez’s (2010) collected volume, Schäffner (2010) and Toury (2010) both consider the agency of translators, the former arguing that media in a globalizing world provides agents with an opportunity to have an ideological voice (Schäffner 2010, p. 122). Toury (2010, p. 167) argues that the entire field of translation studies has “sold out to socio-political struggle and is not science anymore”, a view that
Latour (2007, p. 236) shares regarding sociology. Although Toury obviously responds to the internal academic politics within translation studies that is not directly related to my study, I must say that he seems to have a point in questioning the preponderance of notions of agency in current translation studies. On one hand, the cultural, power and social turns in translation explain the interest, and makes it relevant. On the other hand, it seems like a Western bias again, in particular a bias rooted in critical thought. If you consider the typical binary distinctions in critical thought, you always have good and bad pitched against each other (as an example, see Steiner, 2009). In this simplified worldview, it is the task of the scholar to be against the bad. This is, for instance, why Tymoczko (2007) opts for translation as activism rather than as resistance. The entire translation activity is framed within a “good–bad” conceptualization and everybody is zealously required to join the fight of good over bad—which was once the job of religion, which these same critical scholars have disbanded for its ideological problems. Activism has thus become science—and religion. Although I immediately agree that no science is neutral, I do not think we gain much by equating science with activism. Changing a problem is something different from understanding a problem. To my mind, it remains the primary task of scholarly work to understand, and through understanding to change or to provide others with the arguments to change. I thus think that one has, from a complexity perspective, to juxtapose the functions of understanding and activism. I also suggest that there is more to translation than joining on one side of the fight between good and bad and that a complexity view on translation should be able to think more complexly about the field. Complexly spoken, it could be precisely scholars’ role of understanding that could render an activist service in a world in which people commonly act before they consider. Bringing some kind of understanding to social reality could thus, in itself, function as ethical antidote for a world in which action and taking sides have become ideologies unto themselves.

One of the fields in the social sciences in which complexity theory and emergence theory have been considered is organizational theory. The Complexity and Management Centre at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire in England has developed a theory of complexity with which to conceptualize social phenomena as emergent concepts. Not all of what they have said is relevant to translation studies, but in the context of the current relevance of agency in translation studies, I briefly consider their argument and its implications for translation studies.

In a series of books, some by Griffin (2002) and some edited by Griffin and Stacey (Griffin & Stacey, 2005a; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Stacey & Griffin, 2006), they outline a theory of human agency that problematizes traditional systems theory. They start by asking whether systems are “real” phenomena. Based on an analysis of Kant’s philosophy, they claim that systems theory has been guilty of thinking of social phenomena not “as if” they were real, but as real (see also Latour’s [2007] criticism on sociologists
Taking the social as already constructed), in their analysis, this has led to a situation in which individuals are no longer seen as responsible for their actions and are in fact left passive because “the system” is seen as dominant and unchangeable. The moment the system is deemed real, it overrides the individual. In their view, this type of argument holds negative consequences for ethics because people can abdicate responsibility to the system.

Their argument is that systems theory has gone wrong in ignoring the paradox of universality and individuality in favor of universality. Proponents of systems theory usually argue that both the universal and the individual exist; that is, systems are real things independent from individuals. The eventual consequence is that either the system or the individual is accorded primacy. Furthermore, human beings could as rational beings experience or observe these systems from the outside. Here the implication is that systems are rationally changeable by input from leaders.

In place of this view, Griffin and Stacey (2005a) propose a theory of complex responsive processes. In this argument, they propose a paradoxical relationship between individual and system, but in their theory, the system does not exist prior to symbolic interaction between individuals. A system is an emergent phenomenon that emerges out of the relationships between individuals. Their theory is thus more a theory of process than a theory of system. Society is not a stable thing but a process of human interaction within historical and geographical contexts. They focus on Kant’s notion of a system “as if” it were real, but it is not real. In this theory, society emerges out of the bodily interactions or relationships between human beings. They define the nature of complex responsive processes of relating as first being complex. They understand complexity to entail paradoxes, that is, stable and unstable, predictable and unpredictable, known and unknown, certain and uncertain—and they stress that all these hold simultaneously (Griffin & Stacey, 2006, p. 8). Furthermore, complex responsive processes are self-organizing, which they explain as the interaction of local agents according to their own organizing principles. Last, complex responsive processes are evolving.

The implications for translation studies are, at least, twofold. First, this theory provides a theory of agency that has seriously been lacking in translation studies writings on agency. In even extremely influential works such as that of Milton and Bandia (2009a), some notion of agency has been assumed, but agency itself has not been theorized in this development. Also, notions of systems are rife in translation studies, to which this theory may bring sobering insights.

Secondly, Griffin and Stacey make use of Mead’s philosophy, which claims that the bodily interactions between humans are what constitute society. This claim resonates with arguments I have made concerning translation based on Joussée’s (2000) linguistic anthropology (J. Marais, 2010) and with claims Tymoczko has made based on Wittgenstein’s theory of family resemblances. It is through the interactions, the gestes between humans,
which can include mechanical or vocal gestes, that a society emerges. This means that semiotics plays an important role in the emergence of a society. As far as translation is concerned, this theory provides a conceptual space within which to consider the implications of semiotic, including interlingual, interaction between human agents, that is, forms of translation action. In a globalizing world, interlingual interaction is one of the most important ways in which a large part of society emerges (Cronin, 2006).

Griffin and Stacey’s theory of complex responsive processes offers interesting vistas in conceptualizing the relationship between semiotics and different aspects of society. It has to be worked out in much more detail than what is possible here, but it is clearly a theory of agency which will take into account both aspects of the turn advocated by Gentzler (2008): social and psychological. The theory also opens up space to consider agency both at the informal level, that is, informal economies, workplaces, socializing, and the formal level, that is, the choices professional translators make when they translate and the way in which they actively or by default play an agentive role.

My reference to Griffin and Stacey’s work aims, first, to show how complexity theory and emergence can be applicable to social and human sciences. Second, it provides us with a conceptualization of the presumably binary nature of agency/social system. It also points out a number of problems with current theories of agency in translation:

- They are prescriptive by expecting all translators to fit into the straight-jacket of a critical analysis of reality.
- They assume agency rather than problematizing or theorizing it.
- They cannot prove a causal link between the individual and the social.
- They cannot explain self-organization or unintended consequences.
- They cannot theorize the majority of translation activity in which the translator has no particular intent, other than making money of having to do a job.

I now turn to proposing a complexity conceptualization of translation and translation studies.

3. TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSLATION

I argued earlier that translation studies is currently biased toward a post-modern epistemology that I argued to be, at best, one-sided and, at worst, reductionist. I also indicated that this epistemological bias has a bearing on issues such as the conceptualization of translation and the conceptualization of translation studies as a field of study. In this section, I espouse a conceptualization of translation with a view to addressing the bias by incorporating it into a complexity perspective. Note yet again that my aim is not a classical definition, that is, a necessary and sufficient definition, but
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a (meta-)conceptual framework within which to conceptualize translation and translation studies.

3.1 Inter-ing

Searle (2010, p. 3) expresses my quest in this section elegantly: “Our task is to give an account of how we live in exactly one world, and how all of these different phenomena, from quarks and gravitational attraction to cocktail parties and governments, are part of that one world” (see Figure 3.1).

Based on my conceptualization of complex adaptive systems in Chapter 1 and the emergent semiotics in Chapter 2, I conceptualize translation in this section in terms of the relationship between complex adaptive systems (see also Tyulenev 2011a, p. 133–157). Put differently, semiotics is one particular instance of the category of inter-systemic phenomena in reality, whereas translation is one particular instance of the category of inter-systemic semiotic phenomena in reality. In this section, I hope to explain the detail of this approach. At its most basic, translation is a phenomenon of inter-systemic relationality.

At this point, I wish to link my argument with that of Latour (1987, 2000, 2007; Akrich et al., 2002a, 2002b; Lewis & Mosse, 2006), who set out to devise a “sociology of translation”. By this, he does not mean what translation studies scholars mean, that is, the role of translation proper in society or a sociological perspective on translation proper. Rather, what
he indicates is that the type of sociology he advocates is a translation-type sociology. Translation thus becomes an adjective describing sociology. The social is a phenomenon of the translation type, being constructed by translations between actors/nodes/systems (Latour, 1987, pp. 108, 208–209; Latour, 2007, pp. 64–65).

The reason why Latour takes this line of thought is that he is arguing that the social does not exist but is continually constructed and maintained by means of the connections between actors, hence actor-network theory (Latour, 2007, p. 7). He views the work of sociology as accounting for the connections between actors. To my mind, this conceptualization is very close to the work on complex adaptive systems and especially that of Kaufmann (1995), who similarly works on the creation of networks by means of connections between nodes. Latour (2007, p. 184) applies this kind of thinking to the social, claiming that the social is a process of the construction or assembly of links. This construction is a process of change, connection, movement or, as he calls it, translation.

In my understanding of Latour, he uses translation in the sense of connecting sites or actors, as changing the relationship between sites or actors, of linking sites and actors and maintaining those links. He is thus in agreement with complexity theorists who do not view reality as being in equilibrium but at the edge of chaos, always in the process of becoming. In a sense, Latour sees translation as change, the inter-action between actors and/or systems; it is the construction of systems.

Latour seems lately to have stepped down from the term sociology of translation, but he still uses the term translation in his latest works. To my mind, his work has conceptualized from the perspective of sociology what I have been trying to do here. He has searched for a theory of social process or what the complexity theorists call inter-systemic relationships. He has rejected the idea of looking at the social as a substance, a thing. Rather, the social is an assemblage of connections that are continually translated. What I am trying to argue is that one should expand this thinking to free it from the subject-specific claims of either sociology or translation studies. The scientific project as a whole needs to study relationships (links, connections) and the processes that establish, destroy, and maintain those relationships between systems. All disciplines could contribute their understanding of inter-systemic relationship and its maintenance and construction (inter-systemic-ness and inter-systemic-ing) to this debate, and they could learn from the ways in which this phenomenon occurs in various fields of study. Translation studies thus becomes a field of study that studies all of reality from the perspective of inter-systemic relationships, and it could have subfields of study where inter-systemic semiotic relationships (in particular) and inter-lingual semiotic transfer (even more specifically), and its role in the development of the social are studied.

In a manner typical of complexity approaches, the ontology in Figure 3.1 posits aspects of reality, here conceptualized as complex adaptive systems,
which are all inter-related, hence the dotted lines, and in inter-systemic relationship to one another, hence the double-headed arrows on the dotted lines. Although they do have boundaries between them, these boundaries are paradoxically what make the relationship between them possible, thus the boundaries both delimit and connect (for a discussion of the notion of frontier in history, see Legassick, 2010; also see Kauffman, 1995). From a complexity perspective, one has to consider the boundary as a paradoxical phenomenon of stability/change and delimitation/connection. I call these paradoxical points of connection (spatially conceptualized) or relationships of connection (systemically conceptualized) or acts of connection (conceptualized in term of process) “inters” because they are the inter-relationships between systems. The exact nature of all these different kinds of inters are not within my purview at this stage, but comparing the differences and similarities of various instances of inter-ness or inter-ing could assist in understanding the broader category in itself. In terms of complexity theory, it is these inters that make the connection between open systems possible, which accounts for life and growth and health in systems and which accounts for the self-organization of systems “on the edge of chaos” (Kauffman, 1995, pp. 26–29).

In particular, the semiotic inter is based on the nature of semiotics, that is, taking \( a \) as \( b \). The semiotic process cannot be reduced to something more basic than the taking of one thing as another, that is, \( a \) as \( b \). It differs from a more basic process, which is logic, that is, \( a \ is \ b \). Logic would be something that animals have in common with humans, for instance, a zebra is food, grass is food, and this smell (a lion) is danger. Logic entails a process of identity. The semiotic, in contrast, entails a paradoxical process of \( a \ as \ b \), in which there is both similarity and difference in the process itself (for a similar discussion, yet from a different angle, see also Tyulenev, 2011a). This process of substitution, of seeing similarity based on difference and difference based on similarity, makes complex human thought possible because it entails the symbolic, though some animals have been shown to have limited abilities in this regard (Yule, 1996, pp. 30–39). Thus, in symbolic thinking, one does not only take things as they are, but you also can creatively relate them to other things. Note that the detail of these issues has been discussed in depth by eminent semioticians such as Eco (2001; see also Andrews, 2005; Torop, 2002; Toury, 1986).

The particular nature of inter- and intrasemiotic relationships (or inter or translation), on which much work has already been done (e.g., Sebeok [1986] will have to wait for another day). Here, I wish to establish, against the background of my exposition of complexity theory and emergence, a basic conceptualization of translation as a phenomenon of relationship between systems.

Questions are surely to be raised concerning my use of the notion of inter. For many, it may perpetuate the Western metaphor underlying translation studies, that is, the metaphor assuming transfer between two spaces. This
particular metaphor has come under fire because of its supposed assumption of fixedness in the source and target and its assumption of the ability of transfer as a neutral process. Although I agree that these assumptions are problematic, I contend that the assumptions underlying notions of translation in other cultures cannot be assumed to be without this kind of problem. Further, I agree that inter, on its face, seems to presuppose a spatial conceptualization. However, a closer look at conceptualizations of inter in the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.) indicates two semantic fields related to inter. The first could, indeed, be seen as a spatial conceptualization, that is, inter as between. However, it also has other meanings related to spatiality such as “among, amid, in between, in the midst”. In particular, it lists meanings such as “between or among other things or persons; between the parts of, in the intervals of, or in the midst of, something; together with”. The latter examples do not necessarily relate that strongly to the metaphor of transfer used traditionally in translation studies. The second semantic field, however, includes the notion of mutuality or reciprocity, for instance, interactive. Collins (2006) gives as the second semantic field “together, mutually, or reciprocally” and lists “interdependent” as an example of the latter. I thus use inter in a complex semantic manner as indicating relationships of various natures between systems. I do not specify the relationship, which could have many different characteristics. It could be spatial, it could include transfer, but it need not. It could include process or relationship, but it need not be limited to either. In this way, I suggest that one conceptualizes the field in such a way that it provides space for both supposedly Western, that is, transfer, and supposedly non-Western notions of translation (although I have indicated previously that I find some of the arguments around the distinction unconvincing). Furthermore, I do not specify the nature of the (at least) two phenomena or systems related in the relationship. I am merely positing them, and I cannot see that by merely positing them, anyone could construe my intention as attaching a particular content to either the relationship or the related systems/phenomena. I also need to point out again that my conceptualization of system is in terms of complex adaptive systems that are conceived of in terms of nonlinear logic and openness. This means that systems depend on other systems for their survival, which is a way of conceiving the systemic inter-related nature of reality and phenomena like translation.

It is my contention that, considering translation from all the angles from which it has been studied up to now, one could call it a phenomenon that is characterized by the philosophical notion of change based on stability. Philosophically speaking, reality is constituted by both stability and change. Phenomena change based on their stability and are stable based on change. I want to posit translation as a phenomenon of, primarily, change based on stability, that is, stability based on change. Whichever way one looks at it, in translation you have a (relatively stable) something that is viewed as being changed into a (again relatively stable) something else. This holds true
irrespective of the theoretical perspective one takes, for example, linguistic, pragmatic, functional, cultural, descriptive, sociological, or ideological. It also holds true for all the metaphors used for translation, for all historical periods, and for all culturally different practices. In its broadest sense, one thus has a category of phenomena in reality that is characterized by the notion of change based on stability. In physics, we encounter energies changing into other energies as determined by the law on the conservation of energy. In chemistry, we see the process of catalysis through which chemical substances change form. In biology, osmosis sees a process where information moves into and out of cells. Conceptualized systemically, all systems have borders. The border both contains and connects the system. Any contact between the system and another system assumes some kind of inter-relationship between the two systems. At this stage, I call these phenomena inter-phenomena or inter-ness, from which I obtain the verb *inter-ing*. I have chosen to remain with these relatively abstract notions because I do not want to define the nature of the inter-ness. Inter-ness itself is the larger category of which one may have various instances.

Thus, one may have physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and/or social inter-phenomena. In particular then, in the field of semiotics, which I have indicated to form part of the substratum from which social reality emerges, one would find semiotic inter-ness or semiotic forms of inter-ing. They partake in the characteristics of all other forms of inter-ness and may benefit from studying these kinds of inter-ness. However, they are also specific forms of inter-ness, that is, semiotic forms of inter-ness or inter-ing. Through this kind of complexity conceptualization, I intend to maintain both similarity and difference, two fundamental philosophical conditions.

Note that I have conceptualized, following Tyulenev (2011a, pp. 146–157), the semiotic system as an inter-phenomenon in itself. Its function is, amongst others, to make inter-ing between psychological phenomena possible. From this inter-ing between psychological phenomena, social reality emerges. The semiotic itself is also a translation process where material reality is assembled into the social (Latour, 2007, p. 71). As Figures 3.2 and 3.3 try to make clear, the semiotic (the bold boundary line) constitutes the border between the psychological and the social and is, as such, an inter-phenomenon similar to many other inter-phenomena in reality. I aim to zoom into this boundary line, this border, and turn it into the focus of my further conceptualization.

If it is true that one has a category of phenomena that you can call semiotic inter-ness or inter-ing, you are at Jakobson’s (2004) definition of translation (see also Eco, 2001; Toury, 1986). What Jakobson thus did was to think in binary terms to categorize semiotics. He rightly saw that all semiotic actions entail a movement, a change, a relationship, that is, *a as b*. Thus, understanding means understanding *a as b*, that is, a house as a place where people live. The semiotic works by relationships—of the nature *a as b*. 

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Jakobson then considered whether this relationship takes part between parts of a system or between systems. In this way, he arrived at the well-known distinction between intra-linguistic, inter-linguistic, and intra-semiotic translation. As indicated earlier, my intention here is not to go into the categories
of semiotics. My intention is to conceptualize an ontology in terms of which translation scholars can think about translation. In particular, my focus is to conceptualize the lens through which translation studies look at reality. In this respect, Jakobson poses two problems. First, if one takes his argument to its logical conclusion, all semiotic activities are translations. This leads to the question, What is the difference between semiosis and translation if all semiosis is translation? Second, he does not take account of the fact that inter- at one level could be intra- at another level.

Conceptualized in terms of complex adaptive systems, the semiotic seems to me to be a nonlinear, open, nonequilibrium system, and it is in various relationships with other systems (see Figure 3.4). However, the semiotic is simultaneously a system with subsystems that are in relationship to one

Figure 3.4  The complexity of inter- and intra-semiosis
another, and sub-sub-systems that are in relationship to one another, and
sub-sub-sub-systems that are in relationship to one another, theoretically ad
infinitum. Also, there are relationships among the different levels of semio-
sis. My point is that the distinction between inter- and intra- is a fluid,
complex one, depending on the level of analysis. Let me illustrate the point
by considering Jakobson’s example itself. On the level of language, explain-
ing one word by using other words is an intra-systemic phenomenon because
it operates within the system of the same language. However, on the level of
morphology, this would be an inter-systemic phenomenon. Let me further
clarify by considering the often-used notion of translation as rewriting. If
you take the linguistic system as your level of analysis, rewriting (if you
assume it takes place within the same language) is an intra-systemic phe-
monenon. However, at the level of text it is an inter-systemic phenomenon.
The semiotic thus consists of an endless set of inter- and intra-relationships
between its subsystems that cannot be fixed into the neat categories con-
ceptualized by Jakobson. If one conceptualizes culture as a semiotic system,
you could even consider the inter-cultural relationship a translation. If you
consider semiotic media as semiotic systems (see Basamalah, 2007, p. 118;
Nouss, 2007), you could consider the relationship between a book and a
film a translation, as well as the writing down of an oral narrative. Thus, on
the level of language, reported speech would be an intra-systemic phenom-
enon, whereas on the level of individual speech acts, it is an inter-systemic
phenomenon.

This complex of relationships, to my mind, further explains why one
could conceptualize of translation “as” a number of other things. Semi-
otic phenomena share their “semioticness”, which makes them similar.
Figure 3.4 shows the complexity of the notions of inter-ness and intra-ness.
Thus, between language A and language B, the translation of a novel would
be an inter-phenomenon, relating two systems at the same level. Turning
that same novel in language A into a drama in language A would be an
intra-phenomenon within the linguistic system but an inter-phenomenon on
the level of literary genre.

Setting the novel from language A to a score for orchestra in the music
subsystem would be an inter-semiotic activity on the level of semiotic
systems. Summarizing an annual report in language B would, on the level
of linguistic systems, be an intra-systemic act, while on the level of type of
communicative text it would be an inter-systemic act. Within the system
of music, one could even have sub-sub-systems. For instance, you could
have Mozart rework a piece of Baroque piano music for piano in his
time, which would be intra-systemic on the level of instruments and inter-
systemic on the level of musical style. Or you could have Bach rework
a theme by Vivaldi, which remains an intra-systemic semiotic act if you
consider the Baroque style as a system, but an inter-systemic act if you
consider Bach and Vivaldi as two musical systems because of their differ-
ent styles.
The question, however, remains: How does translation differ from other semiotic phenomena? As indicated earlier, Tymoczko has given up the search for a logical answer to this question. She follows Wittgenstein who advises us not to “think” but to “look”. And yes, taking the route of inductive reasoning with an emphasis on practice and cultural difference does help our understanding of translation. However, starting from the other end of the logical spectrum, that is, deductive reasoning, I do think it possible to conceptualize of translation as an inter-systemic semiotic phenomenon. Furthermore, I can see that conceptualizing of translation in terms of inter-systemic relationships could assist our understanding of translation. Going further than that, it seems to me, will go against the grain of my complexity assumptions. It seems that, between Tymoczko and me, we have now arrived at the meeting point between the orderly (my deductive reasoning) and the chaotic (her inductive reasoning). Fine-tuning this meeting point and its implications is a task for another day. I thus conceptualize of translation in terms of the inter-relationship between various complex adaptive systems. Translation always has an inter-systemic nature, but it partakes in many other features of reality, for example, intra-systemicness. Translations are thus a category of phenomena of reality (Tymoczko, 2007) that share the characteristic of inter-systemicness, whichever way that may be realized in every particular case. The focus or lens of the field of translation studies is thus that of inter-systemic relationships. If need be, one could narrow this down to a subfield of interest that would study semiotic inter-systemic relationships, and if needed, one could narrow it down to inter-systemic linguistic relationships, which brings you to the definition of translation proper.

One thus remains with the problem: Which phenomena in reality do we call translations? If it was easy to distinguish between intra- and inter-systemic relationships, one could easily have called all inter-systemic semiotic phenomena translations. The problem remains that what is inter-systemic at one level is intra-systemic on the next. Also, complexity theory has taught us that reality constitutes complex phenomena partaking in more than one of our categories. My idea is thus to try to get out of “category thinking” into relationship and systemic thinking.

Current suggestions for using the term translation are at two opposite poles of thinking. On one hand, there are scholars who propagate the use of the word translation for “translation proper”; that is, phenomena characterized by an inter-linguistic relationship (Trivedi, 2007). On the other hand, you have scholars who wish to expand the notion of translation to include all inter-phenomena in reality, also the physical, chemical, and biological inter-phenomena (Tyulenev, 2011a). Theoretically, both seem to be possible. Both also pose their own problems. With the first, you exclude so many phenomena of a hybrid inter- and intra-systemic nature that the field of translation studies is narrowed down to only the linguistic instances of inter-semiotic relationships. With the second, the term could be diluted because it
includes virtually all of reality. At the same time, this so-called dilution could be a widening and philosophical strengthening of the foundations of translation studies in which a future field devoted to inter-systemic relationships could develop, especially when viewing the work of Latour. Another solution could be to use the term *inter-systemic studies* or something in this vein for the wider field of interest and retain translation and translation studies for semiotic inter-systemic relationships, due to the historical connection of translation with the semiotic and language. However, some may legitimately argue that it is time to finally sever the umbilical cord between translation and language. Personally, I am not much of a manager and planner and am thus not sure which way would practically work at the level of organizing fields of study. In my own thought, I would in the meantime use the term translation for all kinds of inter-systemic relationships and narrow it down later if need be. Also, in the meantime, one could talk about semiotic translation, physical translation, mathematical translation, biological translation, and so on, if needed.

I thus suggest that, within the field of translation studies, we retain the notion of translation for all inter-systemic phenomena and actions, while simultaneously indicating the systemic level at which you are working, that is, a relativized conceptualization. I also suggest that we use the term *semiotic translation* for the categories subsumed under Jakobson’s classical definition. This hybrid or complex way of thinking, complemented by Tymoczko’s inductive conceptualization of translation seems to be, at least, reflective of the complexity of the field of study. My own conceptualization has provided an explanation for the similarities between translations. Her view calls our attention to what is different between translations. These two views, taken together, help us to think about translation in a complex way, considering and respecting both similarity and difference, stability and change, one and many, necessity and contingency. Combining these approaches, we cover both the deductive and the inductive. I do not claim that they fit neatly into one another or that they do not have internal tensions. What I do claim is that they respect the complexity, meaning both the neat categories (order) and the disturbing differences (chaos), of the complex phenomenon that we know as translation.

To my mind, the conceptualization above holds a number of advantages. It complexly delimits semiotic forms of inter-ness from non-semiotic forms of inter-ness without drawing absolute distinctions between the two. Semiotic forms of inter-ness are still forms of inter-ness, and translation scholars, who in my view work with only a small part of all the inter-ing phenomena in reality, can learn much from studying other forms of inter-ness. At the same time, however, the preceding conceptualization has suggested that not all inter-ness phenomena or inter-ing processes need to be called translations. One could reserve the concept of translation for its use in translation studies, for semiotic inter-ness only. In this way, I have tried to maintain the complex relationship between sameness and difference of all inter-ing phenomena.
Translation and Emergent Semiotics

This section is a further attempt to conceptualize translation in terms of the framework set out in Chapters 1 and 2 and in the arguments presented in this chapter thus far. In this program, semiotic translation is a particular semiotic phenomenon emerging from a substratum of phenomena in cases in which one has an interaction between semiotic systems or subsystems. As indicated in Chapter 2, the semiotic emerges from the psychological, which emerges from the biological, which emerges from the chemical, which emerges from the physical. The semiotic is thus simultaneously and paradoxically emerging from all of its substrata and not reducible to these substrata. It shares aspects of the physical, chemical, biological, and psychological as Jousse (2000) argued quite long ago, but it also has features that are unique to the semiotic. For its part, semiotic inter-ness is a particular instance of inter-ness in general, that is, the inter-ing between systems and subsystems of reality.

If one then zooms in on the semiotic, it consists of various subsystems. I contend that conceptualizing of the semiotic in terms of complex adaptive systems allows one to think about the relationships between semiotic subsystems, not only about the systems themselves. I thus contend that the semiotic system, as a complex adaptive system, contains a number of subsystems, of which language is but one. Also counting as semiotic subsystems could be the kind of phenomena that are called arts, such as painting, sculpting, music, drama, and many others. Technology has made even more of these possible, such as film, television, radio, the Internet, and various forms of social media. Apart from that, semioticians have convincingly argued that all of reality has a semiotic aspect. Thus, architecture is one of the physical subsystems with the most visible semiotic aspect (M. Taylor, 2001). Other phenomena in reality, however, also have meaning, that is, a semiotic aspect. Thus, a dam can be a sign of cultural domination over nature or, if it has run dry, of human and animal suffering. Even a remote physical object such as the moon could have a semiotic aspect, that is, being related to lunacy or being in love.

To return to translation, I argue that, for a phenomenon such as translation to emerge, one has to assume subsystems. Translation is a complex phenomenon emerging from a number of subsystems (see Figure 3.5).

Thus, in the traditional translation, one has to assume language as a subsystem, which itself could be conceptualized as consisting of phonetic, morphological, syntactical, textual sub-subsystems, but one also has to assume the pragmatic, discourse, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and critical linguistic, among other, subsystems. These I would call the substrata of translation proper. Put simply, for translation proper to obtain, its substrata, for example, language, have to obtain. The theory I am putting forward here thus also explains why translation can be studied from a linguistic perspective or a pragmatic perspective, for instance. It is precisely because these features form the substrata of translation. Translation thus has a language...
aspect, a pragmatic aspect, a textual aspect. Each time one of these is taken up as "the" field of study for translation, scholars reduce translation to one of its aspects. It is thus not impossible to study translation as language—but it is reductionist, and it mutilates the phenomenon by claiming that the part is enough to explain the whole. What we need to understand better is translation as translation, as an inter-ness phenomenon in a particular medium with particular concomitant features.

Simultaneously, I argue, semiotic translation itself, the inter-ness semiotic phenomenon, is a substratum in the emergence of social reality. It is thus both a system with subsystems and a subsystem within systems. Let me try to be clear again: One finds semiotic translation as a phenomenon in which semiotic inter-ing relationships among social systems or subsystems obtain. Thus, the economy, in part, emerges from semiotic interactions between human beings. The same holds for law, medicine, engineering, the academe, sport, politics, culture—in short, for all forms of social reality (in Figure 3.6, the arrows connect systems and subsystems, indicating the inter-connectedness
of the whole of reality). This explains why semiotic translation could also be explained “as” culture, ideology, sociology. It is not because translation “is” these things, but because it partakes in the emergence of these things—seeing that reality is a whole. Partaking in the emergence of culture, semiotic translation shows features of culture; partaking in social reality, semiotic translation shows features of social reality. Thus, I am arguing that, up to now, translation has mostly been conceptualized in terms of its aspects or in terms of being an aspect of larger systems, that is, in a reductionist way. This is why one finds the numerous turns and “translation as” conceptualizations. It also explains why metaphor (St. Andre, 2010a) is currently so popular in conceptualizing translation. It focuses on a part of the whole and makes for relatively easy conceptualization where one does not have to consider the whole. It has become time to conceptualize translation as translation. This will not mean that I am trying to reduce everything to translation. Remember, I am working with the notion of emergence that is the opposite of reductionist thinking.

Similarly, social reality emerges from the semiotic interactions between humans (Figure 3.7). These semiotic interactions can take many forms, that is, talking to one another, drawing up contracts for political or economic agreements, drawing plans for architectural or engineering projects, and so
on. All of these may entail intersemiotic inter-ing processes, that is, inter-ing among semiotic systems or subsystems such as turning ideas conceptualized verbally into a building plan. In cases where humans speak different languages, the typical interlingual form of semiotic interactions, which is seen as translation proper, can be conceptualized.

To my mind, the conceptualization above provides translation scholars with a framework within which to conceptualize their field of study across culture, time, space, and ideology. In a complexity way, it maintains both difference and similarity, views the world it conceptualizes as one and many and provides a philosophical space from which to conceptualize the agency role of translation in the emergence of social reality. It points out that translation is a parasitic phenomenon. You have nothing in reality that is only a translation. You have language that has been translated, or texts that have been translated, or legal documents that have been translated. Being semiotic, that is, the substratum of social reality, translation is the inter-ing of other systems, the inter-ing among other systems. Translation is

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**Figure 3.7** Agency, translation, and emergence
not something; it is a particular relationship among systems in which both similarity and difference obtain.

In schematic form, the conceptualization I propose concurs with that of most complexity theorists. I do suggest, however, a number of changes with the main aim of providing semiotics, and language as a semiotic subsystem in particular, with a constitutive position in the conceptualization. Sawyer and Latour have argued convincingly that symbolic interaction is a necessary level in the emergence of social phenomena. However, they did not theorize this strongly enough. Following Sawyer, I suggest the mind/brain/individual as the basic level from which social phenomena emerge, itself emerging from physical, chemical, and biological substrata. In essence, I agree with his second level, that is, interaction. However, because I believe that Jousse has theorized the scope of human interaction fuller than Sawyer has done, I substitute interaction with propositional gest, that is, the bodily ways in which the anthropos interacts with both other anthropoi and its environment (Jousse, 2000; J. Marais, 2010). I have argued elsewhere that this conceptualization opens up possibilities for an ecological perspective on human interaction, including all modes of interaction from muscular twinges to the internet. Social reality emerges out of these gests.

Theories of social emergence have been lacking in their ability to describe or explain the emergence of social phenomena from individual interactions, partly, claims Latour (2007), because they have assumed the social rather than proven it. In order to address this lacuna, Sawyer proposes two more intermediary levels of emergence, that is, ephemeral emergents and stable emergents. This move focuses on the process nature of social emergence; that is, getting to the (relatively) fixed structures of a society is a process that goes through various phases of human interaction. Out of the symbolic interactions among humans emerge first ephemeral emergent phenomena. These refer to situated, local, and temporary “structures” in the process of an emergent social structure. Sawyer (2005, p. 213) includes interactional frames, participation structures, and so on. He argues that these are the phenomena typically studied by sociolinguistics. Out of these ephemeral emergents emerge more stable emergents, which may be subcultures, conversational routines, and shared social practices, among others. They are only relatively more stable, and out of them emerges the relatively fixed social structures, such as written texts as seen in laws, and material systems and infrastructure, such as architecture and so on. It is my contention that, in cases where speakers of mutually inaccessible languages interact in this process, regardless of the level, some form of semiotic translation takes place. This could be oral translation (e.g., interpreting), multimodal translation (e.g. dubbing), digital translation (e.g., websites), or interlingual translation (e.g. forms of rewriting, faked translations, etc.).

This means that I can conceptualize semiotic translation as having emerged out of lower hierarchical levels, not being predictable from its constituent parts, having novel properties that are not found in its constituent parts, and
having a downward causal effect on these properties. The main advantage of this position is that it allows one to stop depending on reductionist definitions of translation. With this conceptual space opened, one does not have to think of translation as “actual” language, literature, direct speech, or anything else. As an emergent phenomenon, translation can be studied as a phenomenon in its own right, that is, translation as translation. This could free up conceptual energy for scholars to look at translation as translation, conceptualizing it in the fashion indicated by Tymoczko. Second, this view of translation explains the downward causative effects that translation has on its constituent parts, in particular language and literature. Thirdly, because this conceptualization is grounded in “human interaction”, that is, a form of anthropology, it should be able to hold for all kinds of societies as Tymoczko has required.

As important, however, is the scope this conceptualization offers for semiotic translation to take a rightful conceptual space in the emergence of social reality. In an ever-increasing global world, interaction among humans from mutually inaccessible languages is becoming more frequent (Cronin, 2006), and the relative importance of acts of translational human interaction is growing. My philosophical stance makes it possible not only to conceptualize the theories of agency seriously lacking in the theoretical underpinning. It also conceptualizes semiotics, in particular language and interlingual communication, as foundational to the emergence of social reality. In translation studies, this has implications for the debate on the visibility of the translator, agency theories, translation, and culture and for the education of translators. However, as far as the relationship of translation studies with other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities is concerned, it posits translation studies as a cluster discipline, which may not be best practiced in an academic department but rather in or as an interdisciplinary cluster. Because the various forms and fields of social reality emerge out of (translational) linguistic interaction, semiotic translation is, at least to some extent, part of the emergence of those fields. In other words, just as one needs some knowledge of physics, chemistry, and biology to understand the brain, without reducing the brain to those substrata, one may need knowledge of semiotic translation to help you understand politics, history, economics, and religious organizations, without reducing those fields to language or semiotic translation. This view is a philosophical underpinning of the notion of the “translation turn” in the humanities. Second, the emergent social structures will exert downward causation on semiotic translation. For translation scholars, this means that they cannot understand semiotic translation without considering the downward causal influence from social fields such as those named earlier. Translation scholars can thus never be purely or solely interested in semiotic translation. Interest in semiotic translation implies an interest in the social structures that, in turn, exert downward causation on semiotic translation.

Against the preceding background, I now set out to argue in more detail that semiotic translation is an emergent phenomenon. I base my argument on that of Queiros and El-Hani (2006), who have convincingly argued that
semiosis is an emergent phenomenon. To my mind, it follows logically that all semiotic phenomena, including semiotic translation, are then emergent. In what follows, I explain the assumptions and features of semiotic translation as they relate to emergence. Queiros and El-Hani (2006, pp. 82–83) demonstrate that the following notions are usually prevalent in discussions on emergence: physical monism and naturalism, systemic versus nonsystemic features, hierarchy of levels, synchronic determination, and diachronic determination. As far as semiotic translation is concerned, it seems to be an advantage to conceptualize semiotic translation within a worldview of physical monism and naturalism; that is, only natural entities are considered. This would allow one not only to consider all forms of semiotic translation, including the oral and the electronic as Tymoczko (2006) has argued (also see Jousse, 2000), but it would also open up the possibility of conceptualizing semiotic translation within a fundamentally ecological philosophy. The second feature of emergence is that a property is emergent only if it is found on the level of the system, not on the level of the parts. This holds for semiotic translation as the features of semiotic translation have been shown to be unique to semiotic translations and do not occur at the level of, say, language or literature. In this regard, one can refer to the “third code”, for example, Baker (1996) on simplification, explicitation, normalization, and leveling out. The third assumption is that of synchronic determination; that is, if the parts change, the whole changes. The fourth assumption of emergence relates to diachronic determination, which, as Queiros and El-Hani (2006, p. 83) rightly point out, causes problems because it seems to be deterministic. It refers to the emergence of new structures based on rules. The fifth assumption with which emergence works is a hierarchy of levels of emergence.

The following four features of emergence, I argue, apply to semiotic translation. First, the whole is irreducible to the constituent parts. In this case, one would not be able to reduce semiotic translations to language, that is, explain all features of semiotic translations in terms of linguistic theory only. Second, it has been proved that semiotic translations exert downward causation. Semiotic translations do not only influence the use of language and literature, but also exert downward causation on culture and other forms of social reality. Third, the emergent phenomena should be novel, that is, have properties not found in the constituent parts. This has been proved of semiotic translation in various studies. Last, emergence implies the unpredictability of the whole from knowledge of the parts. In this regard, I argue that one would not be able to explain features of semiotic translation from knowledge of linguistics or literature or culture, for that matter.

3.3 Complex Adaptive Systems and Agency

Recapping the argument so far, I have been arguing that semiotic translation is an emergent semiotic phenomenon. I built most of my argument on the work done by Tymoczko (2007), arguing that I would like to amend her
inductive conceptualization of semiotic translation with a deductive conceptualization in an attempt to conceptualize translation complexly.

So, my conceptualization of translation starts by arguing deductively with the focus on the concepts of universality, finiteness, unity, knowability, stability, and necessity that one finds a set of phenomena in reality that is characterized by the notion of inter-ness. These phenomena are characterized by change based on stability, and a broad definition of translation studies (or inter-systemic studies) would take as its perspective this notion of systemic inter-relationships. This set of phenomena appears all over reality, that is, in the physical, the chemical, the biological, the psychological, and the social.

I then suggest that one could narrow this set of inter-ness phenomena down to the field of semiotics, which leaves one with a conceptualization of translation that considers the inter-systemic relational nature of semiotic phenomena. Semiotic inter-ness is thus deductively arrived at as the lens through which translation scholars in the traditional sense, as defined by Jakobson (2004), look at reality to determine their field of study. These acts of semiotic inter-ness are found all over reality and thus form one of the substrata for the emergence of social reality. As a field of study, the lens that translation studies uses to view reality is thus semiotic inter-ness. Nowhere in reality, I claim, does one find a phenomenon that is “a translation” only. Rather, one finds categories of phenomena that share inter-systemic semiotic relatedness as a feature. Translation scholars thus study this feature of reality in all kinds of objects.

Simultaneously, I argue inductively, with Tymoczko, with a focus on the concepts of individuality, infiniteness, diversity, unknowability, change, and contingency that the phenomena we study in semiotic translation studies cannot be defined sufficiently and necessarily. Thus, I conceptualize of semiotic translations as a cluster of phenomena that share semiotic inter-ness as a feature, but which are as divergent as reality itself. With Wittgenstein, we point at “this and things similar” to this when we think about translation.

Next, I find it useful to think about translation in terms of complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory. Of all the reasons for this choice considered in the previous two chapters, two stand out for my current argument. The first is the fact that CAS considers both system and agent in a complex way, refusing to provide primacy to either (a view supported vehemently by Latour, 2007). The moment semiotic translation turned to cultural studies, ideology studies and sociology to consider semiotic translation within these wider frames, the relationship between agent and system or structure was added to the agenda of semiotic translation studies. Up to now, studies on semiotic translation and agency have focused mostly on personal ethics (see as an example volume 5, issue 1 of The Interpreter and Translator Trainer) and literary translation (Gentzler, 2008; Milton & Bandia, 2009a), with the focus on the individual agent. The implications of the conceptualization set out above is that one now has theoretical space to consider semiotic translation as social phenomenon in all of its complexity, that is, cultural studies and
ideology studies, but also all aspects of sociology and even further. The role of translation in every single facet of social reality can now be considered. This includes the role of translation in the development of societies (Lewis & Mosse, 2006).

The second for my selection of CAS is that it deals with systems that are open, that is, in interaction with other systems or their environment. I have not seen works in which translation scholars deal theoretically with the problem of open systems and nonlinear causality (Chesterman, 2006). Current work on the agency of translators seems to me too quick to assume a causal relationship between the intentions of an individual agent and the social effects (Tyulenev, 2011a, p. 3). In Chapters 5 through 8 of this book, I try to work out the implications of the tension between agent and system for translation studies, from a CAS perspective.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, I would like to indicate briefly what I believe to be the advantages of thinking about translation from a complexity perspective, in particular in terms of the notion I have suggested of emergent semiotics.

- It assists in the discussion on conceptualizing translation. Reductionist theories and linear logic are not able to account for a complex, culturally determined phenomenon such as translation (Tymoczko, 2006, 2007).
- It provides a theory of agency, explaining the relationship between agents and society, or individuality and universality.
- It conceptualizes translation within an ecological framework. In this sense, it subsumes the binary oppositions in contemporary thought, that is, capitalism versus socialism, empire versus postcolonialism, globalization versus localization.
- It points to complexity studies and emergent studies as well as computer simulation as a future field of study in translation.
- It allows for a theoretical framework within which to conceptualize both micro- and macro-level translation problems and the relationship between them, as argued by Tymoczko (2002).
- It explains the “third code”, that is, translation language that cannot be explained in terms of linguistics alone, the lower-level components.
- Complexity theory can enrich notions of agency by arguing that they currently assume one cause for the complex phenomenon of culture creation, for example, Gentzler (2008).
- A complexity approach questions the use of linear logic in explaining translation, for example, Chesterman (2006).
- Complexity theory challenges the divisions of critical theory and the one-sidedness of deconstruction. It should include the paradox of deconstruction/construction and good/bad.
• Complexity theory makes it possible for translation studies to conceptualize translation as a factor in the development of societies, thus allowing for studies in this regard.
• The conceptualization explains why one could basically claim everything for translation that you could claim for original writing, thus explaining the “translation as” attempts at defining translation.
• This conceptualization should explain how and why translation is to be organized not as a discipline but as a transdiscipline.

The philosophy of translation I have forwarded earlier allows for the particular contextualization of translation in particular contexts, while paradoxically considering the implications for the rest of humanity. It should thus strongly favor a contextualized curriculum, paradoxically juxtaposed with a global curriculum. It should propel research on contextual data for teaching and research, but it should also propel the theorizing in the context of the implications of the data for the global phenomenon of translation.

As the reader would have noticed, I am reticent about the practical, managerial, and organizational implications of the broadened conceptualization that I have presented. At present, I prefer to keep it open because I am aware of the fact that success can never be predicted, only acclaimed a posteriori.