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Source-Language Versus Target-Language Discourse Features in Translating the Word of God

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Abstract

Many Bible translations, including one in Mbyá Guarani of Brazil which this article takes as a case study, use natural target-language discourse patterns on "micro-levels" (within a thematic unit and usually within a sentence or two) but source-text patterns on "macro-levels." Questions arise: Why should such a strategy be used? Why might it work? On macro-levels, how can readers understand what is presented with source-text patterns? And on micro-levels, how can a translation claim to communicate the author's original intent when its discourse functions—not just its forms—are radically different from those of the source text? This article explores such questions and proposes answers using concepts from such diverse areas as general cognition, text processing, genre innovation, information structure, indices of markedness and reader confidence.

1. Introduction

The title of this article is intended as a tribute to Kathleen Callow (1974) and others who pioneered the application of discourse considerations to the Bible translation task. In those early days, it was generally assumed that source-language discourse features had no further use once exegesis was done; afterwards, the translator simply used natural features of the target language.[2] But in practice, there was often a subtle role for source-language features in the translation product. Nida and Taber (1974:112) indicated that translators should try to retain structural forms of the source text in certain places, and retain their functions wherever possible.[3] Thus, the role of source-language discourse features was left somewhat ambiguous, without clear criteria for their use. In this article, I consider certain conditions under which source-language discourse features might legitimately be used in Bible translation, based on actual practice and also in the light of recent developments in theories of translation, discourse, and cognition.

In doing a translation it seems reasonable to assume, at least as a default position, that target-language discourse features should be favored. After all, discourse features are a matter of linguistic form and it is

[1] An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2004 Workshop in Cognitive Grammar and Translation, Horsleys Green, U.K., which followed a short course in Cognitive Grammar presented by Prof. Ronald W. Langacker. I would like to thank Stephen Levinsohn, members of the SIL International Translation Department, and copyeditor Betty Eastman for their helpful comments; any remaining shortcomings are my own.

[2] Callow (1974:9, 11) states: "In this book, it is assumed that the translator knows the meaning of the original" and can "state it accurately in the form of propositions" which "provide a scientific presentation" of all aspects of meaning; all that is left is "to reclothe the meaning of the original in the words and syntax of the RL," that is, using natural target-language forms. Similarly, in Nida and Taber 1974 every meaningful aspect of the source text was treated as "meaning" ("referential meaning," "grammatical meaning," "connotative meaning") which could be rendered in a semantically explicit form by means of "kernel sentences."

[3] According to Smalley (1980:122), "[T]he structure itself conveys certain kinds of meaning which are themselves important; and although the structures cannot necessarily be carried over in translation, their meanings [or functions] should not be destroyed."

not primarily form that is to be transferred, but meaning. But in the aforementioned early work on discourse in relation to Bible translation, it appears that there was a tacit possibility for using source-language features on a certain hierarchical level of discourse organization. The following seems to have been taken as a working guideline:

(1) *Whereas target-language patterns are generally to be used on micro-levels, on macro-levels there are times when source-text patterns can be appropriately used.*

Roughly speaking, micro-level patterns are those that are contained within a thematic unit ("discourse paragraph," "thematic grouping"), usually within a sentence or two, while macro-level patterns require a thematic unit or more.[4] In the early literature, "good" examples of natural-language patterns in translation were almost always on micro-levels, and discussion of reordering in translation was also limited to micro-levels (Callow 1974:43–48). The possibility of major changes on macro-levels was not extensively discussed.[5] For these reasons, there was little explicit discussion of the main question of this article:

(2) *What specific criteria can a translator use in choosing between the discourse features found in the source text versus those found in natural target-language texts?* [6]

I consider this to be a complex question which should be repeatedly addressed as we gain better understanding of discourse (in biblical languages and in general) and of other factors that go into translation. As we will see, there are certain issues involved in Bible translation that rarely arise in regard to general translation.

This article is largely a case study of one translation, the Bible in Mbyá Guarani of Brazil.[7] This translation follows the guideline stated in 1, but in a rather rigid and artificial way: The boundary between micro-levels and macro-levels is, in almost every case, the verse. We will consider how the Guarani Bible came to obey the norms that it did and why those norms seem to "work." I will not argue that this is how translation *should* be done, either in general or even in the specific case of Guarani; I will only try to describe the course things actually took. Some aspects of the Guarani translation are peculiar to it and must be evaluated in its specific context, but evaluating other aspects turns into a more general examination of this guideline. Why should it work?

The question of how the Guarani form of the guideline came about is fairly simple; it involves issues of reader confidence (see sec. 3). But the question of why the Guarani translation, and the guideline more generally, seems to work, is more complex and involves issues on different hierarchical levels. For macro-levels, the question is how readers[8] can understand what is presented with source-text patterns; answers, though partial, seem to involve the degree of entrenchment of patterns on different hierarchical levels, text comprehension on different levels, and genre innovations in secondary texts (see sec. 4). For micro-levels (see sec. 5), the question is whether faithfulness to the source text can be maintained when source-text

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[4] Thematic units are described in Callow 1974:21–28, Longacre 1979, and Dooley and Levinsohn 2001. The distinction between micro- and macro-levels (cf. Van Dijk 1980) needs to be more clearly defined for different languages and genres. See section 4.2 for more on this distinction.

[5] In that same period, when John Beekman was asked about the possibility of macro-level restructuring to convert source-text patterns to target-language patterns, he replied that we knew too little about discourse in biblical languages at that time (Webster 1975, n. p.).

[6] In more recent years an increasing amount of attention in Bible translation theory has been paid to particular literary devices such as chiasmus and parallelism, to semantic relationships between propositions, and to general discourse features *either* in biblical languages *or* in receptor languages separately. However, I have found little written that seeks to relate the two.

[7] The Mbyá Guarani Bible was translated basically from the Portuguese by a mother-tongue translation team with which I served as consultant-advisor. It was published in March 2004 by the Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil. The Mbyá dialect of Guarani is related to the better-known Paraguayan Guarani, but comprehension between the two dialects is not high for untrained speakers. Here, I use the term *Guarani* to refer to the Mbyá dialect.

[8] In this article, the term reader is used for the person for whom a translation or other text is intended; for oral texts, one could substitute hearer.

features are radically exchanged for natural target-language patterns (see sec. 5.2 for a measure of how extensive this kind of change can commonly be). The answer to this question depends on how we view faithfulness. If faithfulness is seen as the successful transfer of the author's intended mental representation, a position which I present in section 2, then the most crucial fact seems to be that mental representations are basically conceptual and constructive rather than purely semantic and linguistic (see Gernsbacher 1985, Johnson-Laird 1996, Kintsch 1998, Zwaan and Singer 2003; see sec. 5.4).

In this article I deal almost exclusively with discourse features that are expressed by means of syntactic restructuring (insertion, deletion, reordering); I have very little to say about features that are expressed on the lexical, morphological, or prosodic levels. Much of the discussion is exploratory; nevertheless, I hope it will contribute to ongoing discussion and understanding.

2. A text-based approach to translation

Certain elements from a general text-based approach to translation will be helpful as background as we address the main question of this paper, namely, *What specific criteria can a translator use in choosing between the discourse features found in the source text versus those found in natural target-language texts?* The major text-based elements are mental representations (sec. 2.1) and a distinction between "disposable" and "essential" discourse features and functions (sec. 2.2).

2.1 Mental representations

Comprehending a text involves constructing a resultant *mental representation* of its meaning. This process is incremental, requiring trial and error, hypothesizing, confirmation and revision, and probabilistic conclusions. There is much that we do not know about mental representations, including the specific neurological form that they take and the best way to model them. But psychological experiments, conducted over several decades, clearly indicate the following (see Paivio and Begg 1981:194 and references there; also Van Dijk 1997:18, among others):

(3) *A reader's resultant mental representation of a text is not a mere copy of the text with its linguistic structures, but converts the text from a linguistic object to a conceptual object.*

The word *resultant* in 3 is important, because it seems clear that the reader initially does use the wording of the text as input to comprehension; but then, as major syntactic and textual boundaries are reached, the specific surface and semantic details are generally integrated into a more abstract form (Gernsbacher 1985:334, 344–354).[9] In this way, the resultant mental representation that the reader takes away from a text is abstracted away from the linguistic form.

The notion of a mental representation can be used to state a major translation goal, having to do with faithfulness to the source text:

(4) *Text-based approaches to translation generally indicate that the most important thing to be transferred is the mental representation that the author intended to convey by means of the text (see Naudé 2002:48).*

Whereas the reader's "resultant mental representation" is a product of the comprehension process, the author's "intended mental representation" is what presumably is in the author's mind as he or she approaches the task of wording. No one can see inside an another's mind, but to the extent that competent exegetes agree, we can often come up with a reasonable idea of the author's communicative goals.[10] On the

[9] "Estimates are that, under most conditions, decay of the surface representation can be measured in seconds" (Zwaan and Singer 2003:91–92), although this can vary with both genre and ease of integration.

[10] The Semantic Structure Analyses published by SIL apparently aim at representing the biblical author's intended mental representation. The SSA for Romans, for example, "is greatly concerned with how meaning is organized, from the lowest to the highest level. It presents the overall organization believed to be in the mind of the author and which he wanted to convey to his audience. It also makes a thorough semantic analysis of even the smallest units, phrases, and

other end of text comprehension, we can sometimes do testing to discern the resultant mental representation that target readers come up with. In my experience, this isn't easy; it might mean asking for a retelling of the text some time after the text was read or heard (to reduce the influence of "disposable" features) and then doing a discourse analysis on the result. Even when we *can* assess mental representations in the source and target situations, there is the question of what parameters should be used in comparing the two and how closely they should correspond along those parameters. For mental representations can be viewed on any level of detail, since they include different kinds and levels of meaning that readers are intended to "get from" the text.

The notion of *intent in translation* is critically important: translations differ according to the kind and level of meaning that their "clients" want transferred, as well as whether the message should be construed in relation to its original context or to the target context.[11] Despite these complexities, to the degree that we can compare the mental representations of author and readers, we can take 4 as a general standard for faithfulness in translation.

2.2 "Disposable" and essential discourse features

The fact that a resultant mental representation is conceptual rather than simply linguistic (see statement 3) implies the following:

(5) *Many discourse and other linguistic features of a text are "disposable"; that is, they can be considered as "a kind of temporary scaffolding, put up in stages in order to construct the more permanent consolidated structure" (Langacker 2001a:181), that more permanent structure being the abstract mental representation of the text.*

To use a different metaphor, discourse features and other linguistic signals can be thought of as "instructions" to readers as to what they should do with linguistic details in putting together their resultant mental representation (ibid.:151, citing Harder 1996). One can think of printed instructions that come with a prefabricated sofa or other piece of furniture: "Fasten side A to base B at point C," etc. Once the sofa is assembled, the instructions are generally thrown away, and the actual assembly sequence may not be reflected in the finished product. In fact, it might be possible to put the same thing together in a different sequence or with different pieces serving as "frames of reference" to which to fasten other pieces.

Returning to the scaffolding metaphor, we observe the following:

(6) *In addition to "disposable" discourse features of a text, certain ones may be judged to be essential—readers must have them in order to construct their mental representation of the text.*

We see this in the way the Apostle Paul structured his letters around a succession of major topics, beginning each one with a prominent topic expression. An example is in 1 Cor. 12:1 ("Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant"), which introduces the following three chapters. The boundary between disposable and essential features will at times be vague, but if the transfer of the author's intended mental representation is taken to be a major translation goal (see statement 4), the distinction itself is fundamental: essential features are those which readers need to have available in order to know how to proceed in constructing their mental representation of the text in such a way that it corresponds to the author's intended mental representation.[12]

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clauses" (Deibler 1998:9). An important distinction can be drawn, however, between the semantics of a text and its mental representation (see sec. 5.4).

[11] The useful notion of "clients" for translation programs is found in Vermeer 1989. "Clients" are the policy setters for a translation. (See Naudé 2002:51 for a survey of recent theory; see also Gutt 1991 for his distinction between direct and indirect translation.)

[12] What is disposable and what is essential is a question of the first order— it cries out for more study. An answer in the final analysis depends on the purposes of the translation. For a Bible storybook, for example, it will be different than for a study Bible. For the Bible translation that we do, either one of two obvious factors would probably always render a discourse feature essential: (a) when it is needed to indicate how the current text unit coheres with what has gone before, or (b) when it indicate higher-level organization that the author is pursuing. Case (a) is referred to as a "bridging

The word *features* in statements 5 and 6 is ambiguous; a distinction needs to be made between linguistic form and discourse function.[13] One discourse function, for example, might be to signal a new major topic in the text, like the topic switch in 1 Cor. 12:1. But there are also topic switches on much lower levels, like the one in the parable of the prodigal son, where a marked word order in the Greek indicates a contrastive switch of topic from the older brother to the father (Levinsohn 2000): "But his father, having come out, was pleading with him" (Luke 15:28). As we compare different languages, the structural signals of topic switching may be the same in some particulars (such as fronting) and different in others (such as particles or other morphemic signals). Probably few translators try to woodenly reproduce Greek structural signals in the target language, but it is often important to reproduce discourse functions, such as topic switch. High-level topic switches are almost always signaled in a translation (hopefully with appropriate target-language forms). But certain low-level topic switches, such as in Luke 15:28 above, can sometimes be—and might best be—left implicit. In the NIV, for example, Luke 15:28 has unmarked topic-comment structure with no specific signals of topic switch: "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him." In fact, no English version I consulted uses a topic switch marker in this place. As much as we are committed to faithfulness in translation, a routine transfer of discourse functions from the source text to the target text would, in many cases, be so unnatural as to distract the reader, making the translation less clear on balance. It would be as if every other word is underlined in a written text. (The opposite difficulty could be likened to someone telling an exciting story in a monotone.) Levels and conditions of appropriate markedness depend on the language, the genre, and the specific point in the text.

2.3 A general schema for translation

Given the text-based notions discussed above, and the use of natural target-language discourse features as in some sense the default choice for translation, we can use the following as a general schema for describing a given translation:

(7) *In a given translation, discourse features follow natural target-language patterns rather than source-language patterns, except under the following conditions:*
(a) special condition 1
(b) special condition 2
...
(x) general constraint: all discourse features should be compatible with the author's intended mental representation.

That is, in addition to the general constraint that all discourse features be compatible with the author's intended mental representation, a translation may have one or more special conditions which constrain the use of natural target-language features. The special conditions may be of different types, having to do with such things as reader confidence in the translation, intended liturgical uses, or highly valued academic or literary qualities. For Bible translations, a common special condition has to do with the possibility of comparing the translation with a high-prestige version that exists in the same or a different language. In the general constraint, discourse features are required to be *compatible* with the the author's intended mental representation rather than, in stronger terms, "to be an exact expression" of it. This is because, according to 5, not all discourse features (or functions) are essential ones. All features and functions, however, should be compatible with it; that is, they should never be contrary to it and they should be used to signal it when needed.

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inference" as opposed to an "elaborative information," which may be interesting information but is not needed for coherence (Zwann and Singer 2003:100–107). Case b, illustrated by 1 Cor. 12:1, is related to the tendency of readers to incorporate any signaled macro-level structures in constructing their own mental representation of the text, as long as such signaled structures don't present them with any particular problems. (This tendency is discussed further in sec. 4.2) But even elaborative information might well be seen as essential if it is sufficiently prominent in the text, as when it is presented as a proposition rather than as a mere lexical feature.

[13] The distinction of form versus meaning in "classical" translation theory becomes a form-function distinction on the discourse level.

Based on this general schema, the strategy for rendering discourse features in the Guarani translation is as follows:

(8) *In Guarani, discourse features follow natural target-language patterns rather than source-language patterns, subject to the following constraints:*
(a) they do not reduce reader confidence in the translation, and
(b) they are compatible with with the author's intended mental representation.

Thus the translation in Mbyá Guarani has only one special condition, dealing with reader confidence in the translation. We now consider the specific form that this condition takes.

3. Reader confidence in the translation

A rock climber contemplates a cliff differently than a mere nature enthusiast. Though he may admire the scenery, he has an immediate practical concern: Will the rock bear my weight? Similarly, translation of the Bible as communication from God differs from translation of ordinary literature: For readers to respond in faith as the text challenges them to do, they must be confident that the text is the authentic word of God. As (Dye 1980:105) puts it, "Authority is the key issue. The Bible is taken by believers as the very words of God; one wants to feel secure about their reliability, even if they are unclear."

When I was working on the Guarani translation, a routine question was, "Whose words are these?" Similarly, Ezard (2003:38) reports that readers of the Tawala translation in Papua New Guinea repeatedly asked: "How can we be sure these are God's thoughts and not just your thoughts?" He goes on to cite a growing body of evidence in support of the following observation:

(9) *When another version is available for comparison, confidence in the translation becomes an issue to the degree that the hand of the translator is obvious.*

For the Guarani, a high-prestige, traditional translation in Portuguese was indeed available for comparison, and the translator's hand was most obvious when verse divisions were compared:

(10) *Whereas there were few objections when material was restructured for naturalness within a verse, there was virtually zero tolerance for permuting verses, grouping verses (e.g., vv. 11–14), or moving material from one verse to another. The verse was, and is, the basic unit of comparison.*

This is not surprising, because the verse is a graphical unit that contains about the amount of material that can be easily compared with another version. It is also true that verses generally express micro-level functions, whereas macro-level functions generally require multiple verses. So in Guarani the guideline stated in 1 has a constraint:

(11) *In the Guarani translation, linear restructuring is permitted on micro-levels (within a verse), but not on macro-levels.*

The Guarani translation team simply did not allow obvious linear restructuring on macro-levels, even when the result put comprehension at risk. As a result, the translation contains certain difficult passages, such as the double flashbacks of Matt. 14:3–4: "Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' " It was not possibile to place these verses somewhere else in the story, so the difficulty remained. Fortunately, this degree of difficulty is rare.

The main point here is that, among the mother-tongue "clients" of the Guarani translation, there were two major goals with more or less equal weight: biblically unsophisticated readers need to have a reasonable chance of understanding the content, and biblically more sophisticated ones need to have confidence in the translation.

Although in this article I am primarily concerned with discourse features that involve syntactic change of clause- or higher-level constituents (insertion, deletion, or reordering), a brief comment about other kinds of discourse features is in order here: Features that do not involve obvious syntactic change and are therefore less prominent do not generally involve reader confidence for Guarani readers hence they are

generally rendered by natural target-language forms, subject only to the general condition that the author's mental representation is being transferred.[14]

4. Comprehending source-language patterns on macro-levels

In the Guarani translation, restricting syntactic reordering to micro-levels produces a systematic violation of naturalness on macro-levels. Nevertheless, actual problems of comprehension are rare. I see three possible explanations for this: different degrees of entrenchment (sec. 4.1), different kinds of text comprehension on different hierarchical levels (sec. 4.2), and genre innovation (sec. 4.3).

4.2 Different degrees of entrenchment

Kenneth L. Pike (personal communication) once observed that in language, "norms of structure get tighter as one gets down lower from discourse to paragraph to sentence to clause to word."[15] His observation implies the following:

(12) *Discourse patterns tend to be less entrenched on macro-levels than on micro-levels.*

This observation is demonstrated by the way readers tend to react to non-natural expressions on different levels and by the repair strategies they use. On micro-levels, there are few ways that a given proposition can be construed for the purposes of focus structure: topic-comment, focus-presupposition, presentational, etc. (Andrews 1985:77–80, Lambrecht 1994). The choice of one construal over another is often conditioned by the current activation status of the concepts involved: topics and points of departure need to be accessible and presupposition components need to be activated (Chafe 1994, chap. 6; Dryer 1996). Because these forms depend on activation conditions which readers constantly monitor, there is acute recognition when such forms are used incorrectly or in odd ways. For example, suppose an English translation of the parable of the prodigal son began: "A certain man had two sons. It was the younger son who came to his father and said...." The second sentence assumes that the proposition *One of the sons came to his father and said....* has been activated. But since it has not in fact been recently activated, readers would naturally think of that sentence as being incorrectly phrased. Alternatively, they might wonder whether, in the biblical culture, the older son should have come to the father with the request. The possibilities for "what to make of this structure" are very few, and this makes infelicities seem acute.

On macro-levels, reader reactions to non-naturalness are generally different, partly because the ways of structuring large segments of text are more open-ended, involving such things as the relative order of main points, the relative order of supporting material with respect to main points, and the inclusion or not of introductory material, conclusions, and applications. It is true that some languages have conventionalized patterns of composition on macro-levels (Connor 1996); when readers encounter a text that differs from a familiar pattern, they may experience difficulties of comprehension. Even so, readers generally don't react to non-naturalness as being incorrect, but rather as being difficult or confusing. Moreover, if they are interested in understanding the text, they will probably try to figure out the author's intent.

This may be summarized as follows:

(13) *When readers encounter non-naturalness on micro-levels (whether in grammar or in discourse-pragmatics), it is a fairly simple matter for them to verify that appropriate conditions of use have not been correctly met, hence that the expression is incorrect or incomplete. When they encounter non-naturalness on macro-levels, the possibilities for explanation are more open-ended, so that they are*

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[14] Such features include patterns of participant reference; degrees of thematicity signaled by demonstratives or special pronominal patterns; spacers between constituents; focus particles; dependent versus independent verb forms; syntax-preserving ways of highlighting constituents; signals of background versus foreground such as verbal aspect; connectives that indicate discourse organization (whether or not they involve semantic relationships); and referential indicators of definite versus indefinite or specific versus generic.

[15] One reason for this is the following: "As we move from larger, loosely integrated structures to those which are smaller and more compact (at the extreme, a single verb stem), their processing occurs on a progressively smaller time scale" (Langacker 2001b), and a smaller time scale favors routinization.

generally more disposed to try to analyze what the author was trying to say (if motivated to do so)

Statement 13 is related to 12 because less entrenched patterns are processed in less automatic, more analytic ways. The motivation mentioned at the end of statement 13 is something that many readers of the Bible have in strong measure, although casual readers do not.

4.2 Text comprehension on different hierarchical levels

A second factor in the acceptability of source-text structure on macro-levels has to do with the fact that readers integrate text material into mental representations in different ways on different hierarchical levels. Although this area requires more research, it is of obvious importance. Simply put, the idea is this:

(14) *Readers tend to do major integration of surface details into mental representations at boundaries of thematic units. Within a thematic unit, hence on micro-levels, information is often reconstituted in radical ways; above the level of thematic units, changes can generally be expected to be less radical.*

According to an influential study by Gernsbacher (1985:334, 344–345), "information about original surface form becomes markedly less available just after comprehension has crossed the boundary of one constituent into another.... Constituent boundary effects are the direct result of processing shifts," which "shift from actively building one structure, really a substructure, to initiating another.... [I]nformation represented in a particular substructure is most available during the active processing of that substructure. Once a processing shift has occurred, information represented in the previous substructure becomes less available." A key level for processing shifts is thematic units, at whose boundary there is a change of "ongoing topic, point of view, or setting.... [U]pon encountering these changes, subjects had difficulty mapping the incoming information onto the structure they were developing and, hence, broke off building one substructure and began another" (ibid.:346).

In a recent survey of text comprehension, Zwaan and Singer (2003:93) indicate that "comprehenders keep track of at least five situational dimensions during comprehension: time, space, characters, causation, and motivation.... [T]wo events that overlap on multiple situational dimensions are more strongly connected in the comprehender's long-term memory representation than two events connected on only a single dimension." These are the dimensions that have long been identified, from Aristotle up through Givón and Chafe, as defining "thematic units." Dooley and Levinsohn (2001:37, 40) observe that "Within a thematic grouping, there is usually continuity along all four dimensions [in their treatment causation and motivation are combined into a single dimension of "action"]. One can think of a new thematic grouping resulting when the speaker leaves one section of the mental representation and moves on to, or perhaps creates, another.… [S]peakers use the onset of a thematic grouping to do a general update" of setting information along its various dimensions. This general updating is natural since the new thematic unit begins again a cycle of analysis and integration.

If the boundaries between thematic units are a major place (possibly *the* major place) for readers to convert surface information to a more abstract mental representation, then presumably this applies to top-down as well as bottom-up processing (Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, sec. 9.4). Once things reach the mental representation stage, readers tend not to modify their representation or experiment with other possible representations unless they encounter a specific difficulty (see Johnson-Laird 1996:123). Thus, if the text exhibits a clear macro-level structure, they tend to accept it as "given."

This kind of research was mainly done on same-language texts. In translation, it offers an explanation for the fact that source-language features tend to be tolerated on macro-levels. That is, this pattern may be an expected outcome of general text comprehension, not just an artifact of reader confidence issues in translation. As long as readers have no specific difficulties with a particular macro-level structure, it may not make much difference if it comes from the source text or from natural target-language patterns.

4.3 Genre innovation and a dynamic view of text types

A third reason why source-text features can "work" on macro-levels has to do with the general expectation that translation and other secondary texts will differ from primary texts, often because of genre innovation.

A *genre* is a conventional three-way association of content type, linguistic features, and sociocultural goals in which the text is instrumental (Bakhtin 1986:60). Genres that we think of as "naturally occurring" belong to *primary texts* (texts that are produced naturally in the language and culture); the genres of *secondary texts* (translated texts or texts that have to do with content outside the culture) are usually modified from primary text genres. Genre features for secondary texts and other innovative text types arise in response to the particular content, goals, and conditions of the text. From a historical perspective, all genres arise through innovation, except possibly for primary texts types that were somehow in existence as the language was being born. This dynamic view of text types sees genre as being subject to natural change and development. Since a language's inventory of genres is not static, neither is the notion of naturalness on macro-levels. The result for translation is obvious:

(15) *Because Bible translation is a secondary text in important respects, it can be expected to develop its own genres in a natural way, or rather to modify existing genres for its own purposes and conditions.*

In an important article, De Vries (1999:28) observes: "Among the many factors that constitute the macrogenre of Bible translations in Irian Jaya, three come to the fore: (1) the still relatively new institutional and cultural setting in which these texts function, the Christian community and its activities; (2) the secondary nature of translated texts; and (3) the new medium, writing." Genre innovations which De Vries observed include the following: "relatively few topic markers and tail-head linkages, markedly strong identifications of given participants, and shorter clause chains" (ibid.:41). In all of these, features were changed that are especially prominent in the languages of that region.

The same conditioning factors hold for Guarani, and several of the same innovations as well.[16] In comparison with primary Guarani texts, repetition of all kinds was reduced and citation postmargins, such as 'he said', were generally deleted if the citation had a pre-margin (for more detail, see Dooley 1989). Some of these innovations in the Guarani Bible are found in other Guarani written texts, but other innovations, such as shorter clause chains and reduced citation margins, seem to relate specifically to translation. A Bible translation has peculiar, probably unique, conditions of use: It is a written document, but in Guarani its two major tests—close comparison with other versions and repeated public oral reading by inexpert readers—involve much more than simple reading by an individual.

Genre innovations in translation arise in one of two ways: language-internally or by borrowing. Language-internal innovations arise either because of the unique nature of the text or because of new situations in which it is used. For example, repetition and citation postmargins were reduced in the Guarani Bible because they sounded too prominent in public reading (Dooley 1989). Language-internal innovations are presumably never arbitrary; they are linguistic responses to specific conditions. The second source of genre innovations is borrowing or adaptation from another language, either conscious or subconscious. An example of conscious borrowing is seen in a decision of the committee for the new Dutch translation (NBV) that it "should reflect the literary forms and structures of the source texts" on macro-levels because of its intended liturgical uses (De Blois and Mewe 2002:218–219). I suspect, however, that most borrowed innovation arises without a conscious decision, as was true for Guarani.

Regardless of how genre innovation arises, it involves modification of existing patterns:

(16) *Language-internal genre innovation begins with existing target language patterns and modifies them to meet new conditions; borrowed innovation begins with source language patterns and modifies them, as possible, in the direction of existing target-language patterns. In both cases, modification makes the text "sound better" to its readers.*

On macro-levels, modification of source-language patterns towards target language naturalness can involve adjustments of many different grammatical kinds and levels. For one example, in the double flashback of Matt. 14:3–4 (cited in sec. 3), the Greek has simple aorist verb forms (Herod 'bound' and 'imprisoned' John), but Guarani uses a pluperfect construction ('had already arrested'), which helps to clarify the time reference.

[16] Mbyá Guarani, like languages of Irian Jaya, has switch reference and clause chaining.

5. Faithfulness on micro-levels

As previously mentioned, Guarani translators accepted syntactic restructuring on micro-levels (within verses). This means that information structuring in the translation is often different from that of the source text. In the parable of the prodigal son, for example, where the Greek uses a marked ordering to signal a low-level topic switch in Luke 15:28, the Guarani has an unmarked topic-comment (predicate-focus) sentence, just as in the NIV: 'So his father came out to encourage him [to enter].' Does this lessen the faithfulness to the source text? Before addressing that question, I will sketch a view of markedness in information structuring (sec. 5.1), present preliminary statistical evidence to show that departure from source-language patterns may be systematic and pervasive (sec. 5.2), and then mention some factors that could lie behind these cross-linguistic differences (sec. 5.3). In light of these considerations, I return in section 5.4 to the question of faithfulness on micro-levels.

5.1 Markedness in focus structure

Focus structures, also called "sentence articulations" (Andrews 1985) or "discourse-pragmatic configurations (Dooley and Levinsohn 2001, chap. 11), involve constructions that are known in the literature by such names as topic-comment, theme-rheme, focus-presupposition, presentational, and event-reporting. Each language has a fairly small inventory of such structures, and for that language, each structure has particular formal features and discourse functions, marked and unmarked. Following Dryer (1995:105–106), we can characterize this kind of markedness as follows:

(17) *In a particular language (and perhaps in particular discourse genres of this language), a focus structure is* unmarked *if it is default, that is, if there are concise ways to characterize situations in which other,* marked *structures are used, with the unmarked structure being most easily characterized as the one that is used elsewhere.*

I do not assume that each utterance will show a particular focus structure. It is possible for an utterance to have morphosyntax that is incompatible with all of the focus structures identified in the language, or for it to be compatible with more than one. That being so, definition 17 can be interpreted as applying only to utterances for which a particular focus structure can be identified. With this understanding, one can identify the marked and unmarked focus structures of a language.

Furthermore, languages differ as to how prominent focus-structure phenomena are vis-à-vis what could be thought of as "neutral grammatical structure."[17] Typically, a language's neutral grammatical structure reflects an unmarked focus structure. Lambrecht (1994:122) hypothesizes that all languages have an unmarked focus structure, and further "that in English, as in other languages, subjects are UNMARKED TOPICS and that the topic-comment articulation is the UNMARKED PRAGMATIC SENTENCE ARTICULATION."[18] Similarly in the other languages and language groupings mentioned in this article (Koiné Greek, Mbyá Guarani, Portuguese, Bantu languages of Mozambique), definition 17 identifies topic-comment as the unmarked focus structure and the subject as unmarked topic for narrative, although there may be other genres with some other structure as unmarked. Even though the cross-linguistic status of unmarked focus structure has several outstanding questions, these four languages may well turn out to be typical, and for good reason.

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[17] According to Thompson (1978:19–20), "There are basically two ways in which languages can utilize the linear arrangement of predicates and their arguments: pragmatically or grammatically. That is, a language may either use this order pragmatically to signal which parts of the sentence convey old vs. new information, or they may use their order to signal some essentially grammatical information, such as aspectual information, what the grammatical relations in the sentence are, whether the sentence is a question, or whether it is a subordinate clause. From a typological point of view, then, we can show that some languages utilize predicate-argument order primarily for pragmatic purposes, and some primarily for grammatical purposes. There are also languages which use predicate-argument order for both purpose[s] without giving priority to either.... As with many other typological parameters, this one forms a continuum along which languages may position themselves."

[18] Lambrecht's notion of markedness appears to be compatible with the one being presented here.

5.2 Differing indices of markedness

Even for languages that have the same unmarked focus structure (topic-comment), there can be radical differences in the occurrence of marked structures. To see these differences, start with a rough statistical calculation: *indices of markedness.* The idea is simple: In a text, count the number of instances of marked word order in independent clauses and divide by the number of independent clauses. The result is a measure of overall marked word order, an average number of marked orders per independent clause (this value can be greater than one). The method can be refined in different ways: Instead of counting all kinds of word-order markedness, one could count particular discourse functions and arrive at, for example, indices of marked focus or of marked topic (or point of departure).[19] Or one could count other signals of markedness besides word order, such as focus particles or spacers of different kinds, intonation or its graphical representation as punctuation. Another refinement would be to calculate indices for specific genres or individual authors; the index is very rough when calculated for a language as a whole. When comparing two languages, pitfalls multiply; for example, topic in one language may have somewhat different conditions of occurrence from topic in another language.

Even with these limitations, I believe that the following observation is valid:

(18) *Indices of markedness commonly vary in significant ways across languages.*

This is illustrated in table 1, in which indices of markedness have been calculated for five languages using the parable of the prodigal son and, in some cases, natural written narrative texts.[20]

TABLE 1. SAMPLE INDICES OF MARKEDNESS FOR NARRATIVE

	Marked focus	**Marked topic/point of departure**	**Overall**
Mbyá Guarani:			
Luke 15:11–32			
for word order alone	.12	.24	.36
for all signals	.14	.32	.46
a primary written text			
for word order alone	.21	.21	43
for all signals	.43	.30	.73
Koine Greek:			
Luke 15:11–32	.24	.24	.48
Mozambican Bantu (several languages):			
primary written texts	not calculated	not calculate	approximately.15
English:			
NIV Luke 15:11–32	.04	.08	.13
Portuguese versions (NVI is similar to NIV, Almeida RA to RSV, NTLH to Good News Bible):			
NVI Luke 15:11–32	.09	.07	.16
Almeida RA Luke 15:11–32	.16	.05	.21
NTLH Luke 15:11–32	.04	.17	.25*
* The total includes another markedness category not shown.			

These indices were calculated very roughly for illustrative purposes only. Except for Mbyá Guarani, they deal only with marked word order, both overall and for the two specific functions of marked focus and

[19] See Dooley and Levinsohn 2001 for these notions, which are largely based on Lambrecht 1994.

[20] As Stephen Levinsohn notes (personal communication), it would be better to use only naturally occurring text for initial computations and only afterward to include translated material. But in Bible translation, the picture is complex in any case. We eventually need to compare indices between the target text (secondary material) and the source text. In some cases the source text can be assumed to be primary material, but the teachings of Jesus and possibly other material in the synoptic Gospels is apparently itself translation, hence secondary.

marked topic/point of departure. Even with the diminutive size of the corpus and the roughness of the calculations, it seems highly likely that indices of markedness can indeed vary greatly from one language to another. Overall word-order markedness, for example, varies from .13 for English (fixed word order, SVO) to .48 in Koine Greek (free word order, VSO; see Levinsohn 2000). Mozambican Bantu languages (SVO) that I worked with in 2004 have indices similar to English; the figures for Portuguese are somewhat higher. The overall word-order index for Guarani Scripture (free word order, SVO; Dooley 1982) is almost three times that of English; for a primary written text it is higher yet (.36), but still below the Greek.[21] In calculating the index for Guarani, I was aware that there are many structures that are signaled by things other than word order, so I did a second count; when other kinds of signals are counted, overall markedness rises to .46 in Scripture and to .73 in primary written text.

In non-narrative material, differences of the same kind emerge. In table 2, I compare Gal. 6:1–5 in Greek and Mbyá Guarani, giving literal glosses, and in independent clauses I indicate marked word order, parse constituents, underline the focus expression, and label the focus structure.

TABLE 2. GALATIANS 6:1–5 IN KOINÉ GREEK AND MBYÁ GUARANI

Galatians 6:1–5 in Koiné Greek

1) (Brothers, if indeed is overtaken a man in some transgression,)
   S V O/Comp Adjunct *(fronted S as marked topic, predicate focus)*
   you the spiritual ones <u>restore such a one in a spirit of meekness</u>,
   (watching out for yourself lest also you be tempted.)
2) **O V** *(fronted O as marked focus)*
   <u>One another's burdens</u> bear
   Adjunct V O/Comp *(fronted adjunct as marked focus)*
   and thus you-will-fulfill the law of Christ
3) (If for thinks anyone to be something, nothing being,)
   V O/Comp *(default order, predicate focus)*
   <u>he-deceives himself</u>
4) **O/Comp V S** *(fronted O as marked focus)*
   <u>The</u> but <u>work of himself</u> let-prove each man,
   Adjunct O/Comp V *(fronted adjunct as marked focus + fronted O as marked topic)*
   and then <u>in himself alone</u> the boast he-will-have and not in the other man;
   S O/Comp V *(fronted S as marked topic + fronted O as marked focus)*
5) **each man for<u>his own load</u> will-bear.**

Galatians 6:1–5 in Mbyá Guarani

1) (Brothers, someone incorrectly living is-seen if,)
   S V Adjunct *(default order, predicate focus)*
   you with Spirit live who <u>will-counsel-him getting-angry without</u>.
   V O/Comp *(default order, predicate focus)*
   <u>Be-careful also you too let-yourselves-be-deceived not so-that</u>.
2) **V O/Comp** *(default order, predicate focus)*
   <u>Take each one's load.</u>
   Adjunct O/Comp V *(fronted adjunct as marked focus + fronted O as marked topic)*
   <u>In this way future-only</u> Christ's law by you-live.
3) (But if someone not having correct life to himself "I have a correct life" says)
   O/Comp V *(fronted O as marked focus)*
   <u>they themselves</u> deceive.
4) **S V O/Comp** *(default order but with argument focus on O)*
   Each one of you investigate <u>his own life regarding</u>.

[21] These figures agree with intuitive judgments of linguists which I have heard.

Adjunct S V *(fronted adjunct as marked focus)*
In this way future-only rejoice-in-oneself nomin it-is-correct,
O/Comp V postmargin V *(fronted O as marked topic)*
others' lives regarding investigate I-don't-say.
5) **S V O/Comp** *(default order, predicate focus)*
Because each one will-take his own load.

Free translation of the Guarani: [1]Brothers, if someone is seen to be living incorrectly, you who live with the Spirit should counsel him without getting angry. Be careful also that you too don't let yourselves be deceived. [2]Bear each other's load. It's only in this way that you will live by Christ's law. [3]But if those who don't have a correct life say to themselves "I have a correct life," it's themselves that they are deceiving. [4]Each of you should investigate his own life. It's only in this way that it will be right for one to rejoice in himself, but I'm not saying "Investigate the lives of others." [5]Because each one should bear his own load.

On comparing the Greek with the Guarani, we find that not a single pair of corresponding independent clauses has the same focus structure, and only two of the pairs (vv. 1a, 4a) have the same focus expressions, marked or otherwise. English and Portuguese versions of Gal. 6:1–5 also diverge considerably from the Greek focus structure. In the NIV, about half of the independent clauses have focus expressions that are different from the Greek. In v. 5, for example, where the Greek has argument focus, 'his own load', the NIV, like the Guarani, has unmarked predicate focus, 'should carry his own load'. When markedness indices are computed for this passage, the four languages show the same order of increasing overall word-order markedness that we observed earlier for narrative in table 1: English < Portuguese < Guarani < Greek.[22] Although the passage is extremely short and the analysis is rough, it supports the hypothesis that different languages can show radically different degrees of markedness in comparable material. The extreme range of differences raises the question of translation faithfulness in a compelling way.

5.3 Conditions of use and multiple-structure patterns

These statistical counts point to more basic facts. When speakers of Guarani produce a text, I'm certain that they don't do a running calculation of markedness indices in their heads as if the text, to be natural, should have indices with the characteristic values of the language. Rather, these indices reflect specific conditions of use for the individual discourse features involved (marked topic, argument focus, etc.). As Dryer (1995:127) says, "I assume ... that languages can vary widely in what discourse factors are associated with pragmatically marked word order. While one language may use a marked word order in certain situations, another language may use the unmarked word order in corresponding situations, and use a marked word order in situations in which the first language uses its unmarked word order." The feature of marked topic in English evidently has conditions of use that differ from those of marked topic in Koiné Greek. Between any two languages, conditions of use for a given feature can be expected to show only partial overlap.

Conditions of use for individual focus structures are often part of larger patterns. When a specific type of situation is to be described, a given language is likely to have typical patterns for construing that description, each pattern involving a small number of utterances in which a characteristic sequence of specific discourse features occurs. This pattern, which I will call a *multiple-structure pattern*, is a construction in the sense of Construction Grammar (see, for example, Croft 2001), but on a discourse level; within it, multiple focus structures occur in distinct roles. In a certain discourse situation the construction as a whole is invoked, rather than each of its component focus structures separately. For example, in Guarani a complex event with several items of new information is commonly described in a sequence of utterances, the first having unmarked topic-comment articulation and subsequent ones repeating the predication of the first but adding a piece of new information in initial position with argument focus, a marked structure. The

[22] For Gal. 6:1–5, three indices of word-order markedness (marked focus + marked topic = overall) come out as follows: English NIV (0 + .11 = .11); Portuguese NVI (0 + .14 = .14); Almeida (.13 + .13 = .26); NTLH (0 + .11 = .11); Guarani (.33 + .22 = .56); Greek (.71 + .43 = 1.14).

following translation of the initial segment of a text shows a multiple-structure pattern having three sentences, each one with a unitary focus structure (Dooley 1982:328–329):

(19) *I went hunting with non-Indians. In a pickup truck we went. With our weapons we went.*

Multiple-structure patterns are micro-level phenomena, but intermediate in scope between single-utterance micro-level features and macro-level features. They are conventionalized to different degrees within a given language and often differ between languages.

Another multiple-structure pattern in Guarani is seen in the translation of Gal. 6:1–5 (see table 2). In vv. 2b and 4b there is argument focus on the connective. Instead of saying simply 'In this way' in vv. 2b and 4b, the Guarani has 'It is only in this way'; the word 'only' is a focalizer. These utterances continue a multiple-structure pattern whose first utterance is a command: 'Take each one's load' in v. 2a and 'Each of you should investigate his own life' in 4a. The argument focus construction in vv. 2b and 4b is not actually obligatory (few discourse features are), but the multiple-structure pattern shown here is common in the language and conventionalized to a higher degree than in European languages with which I am familiar.[23]

I believe that many instances of marked focus structures occur in text as part of multiple-structure patterns and that these larger patterns are responsible for much of the difference in indices of markedness that we observe across languages. Within the Guarani pattern in 19 for example, the markedness index is .67; the same situation, as commonly described in English, would have an index of .00: *I went hunting with non-Indians. We went in a pickup truck, with our weapons.*

5.4 From semantics to conceptualization

To describe a particular situation, Greek may use one multiple-structure pattern and Guarani another. The two patterns may differ radically in their internal structure and indices of markedness. Sentences may be divided differently and propositions can be presented in a different order, with correspondingly different propositional semantics. But this does not mean that the situation would be understood differently—the resulting mental representation could be the same. As in the illustration of assembling a piece of furniture (see sec. 2.2), one person may begin by putting small pieces together, another might begin with large pieces, but the product could be the same.

Here we are applying to discourse a three-way distinction that is made in cognitive linguistics between syntax, semantics, and conceptualization. Semantics is tied to particular expressions in a language, and cannot get away entirely from syntax. "If one language says *I am cold*, a second *I have cold*, and a third *It is cold to me*, these expressions differ semantically even though they refer to the same experience, for they employ different images to structure the same basic conceptual content" (Langacker 1987:47). As long as a speaker is utilizing conventional patterns of the language, whether in a single utterance or in a multiple-structure pattern with various utterances, the final conceptualization—the situation as understood by the hearer—is not determined by the "temporary scaffolding" that is used in putting it together. Since semantics depends heavily on linguistic elements, it is a halfway house between syntax and conceptualization, hence is more universal than syntax but less universal than conceptualization (see Croft 2001:128):

(20) **Less universal** ←——————————————————→ **More universal**

syntax *semantics* *conceptualization*

Abstract mental representations, as conceptualizations, belong to the more universal end of the scale. In a text-based approach that aims at transferring these mental representations rather than semantic details per se, translation suddenly appears more possible.

What constraints hold in translation for the use of natural target-language discourse features on micro-levels? Is the translator free to present the message in any way that comes out natural? In this article, the

[23] Conditions of use for information-structure possibilities in Mbyá Guarani are discussed in Dooley 1982; those for Koiné Greek are discussed in Levinsohn 2000.

most general constraint is that the resultant mental representation be compatible with the author's intended mental representation (see 8). On one hand, this condition blocks discourse features that would change the author's intended mental representation; on the other, it requires that any essential discourse functions which occur in the source text (see 6) be appropriately represented in the target text (unless they are somehow implicit in the target text). This implies, for example, that there be an explicit signal of the major topic switch found in the Greek of 1 Cor. 12:1: "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant." This is, in fact, explicitly signaled in all translations I consulted in English, Portuguese, and Guarani.

6. Summary and concluding discussion

In this article I pose a question for translation, and for Bible translation in particular: What specific criteria can a translator use in choosing between the discourse features found in the source text versus those found in natural target-language texts? I examine the translation of the Bible into Mbyá Guarani, principally in regard to syntactic restructuring (inserting, deleting, or reordering material) on the clause level and higher, but occasionally in regard to other kinds of discourse features. For Guarani, the general answer to the question is as follows: Discourse features follow natural target-language patterns rather than source-language patterns, subject to the following constraints: (a) they do not reduce reader confidence in the translation, and (b) they are compatible with the author's intended mental representation. This overall strategy is compatible with the general translation goal of target-language naturalness, the text-based translation goal of transferring the author's mental representation, the cognitive view that (many) discourse features are "temporary scaffolding," and issues of reader confidence (see sec. 3).

The reader-confidence constraint might not be relevant for some kinds of translation, especially of an expressive literary variety, where discourse features are important but accuracy may not be (Du Plooy 2002). For Bible translation as well as for technical writing, however, the situation is the opposite: a high degree of accuracy is demanded, but the transfer of certain discourse features may not affect reader confidence. The particular form the reader-confidence constraint takes for Guarani, involving hierarchical levels of discourse functions, may be limited to translation of the Bible or other religious/ritual texts. It would be important to see what forms this constraint takes in Bible translations done in diverse situations; possibilities go from no constraint at all to restrictions on all levels of language. For Bible translation aiming at widespread readership, this constraint would hopefully not impose serious restrictions on micro-levels.

The reader-confidence constraint for Guarani allows syntactic restructuring on micro-levels (within the verse) though not on macro-levels. While this makes for occasional non-naturalness on macro-levels, it seems to disrupt comprehension less there than non-naturalness does on micro-levels. There are three possible reasons for this: (a) when readers encounter macro-level non-naturalness, those who are motivated to understand try to work through the problem by analyzing the content; (b) discourse patterns above thematic units may routinely be accepted as "given" by readers instead of undergoing the radical integration that often happens within thematic units; and (c) genre innovation is expected in secondary texts, so that patterns are modified to make texts easier to process. As point b suggests, the common practice of limiting source-text restructuring to macro-levels (see the guideline in 1) may not be due entirely to issues of reader confidence, but may reflect a more general strategy of text comprehension that goes beyond translation.

On micro-levels, the natural Guarani discourse patterns in the translation often differ radically from those of the source text, whether one uses the Greek or the Portuguese as Guarani translators did. The extent of restructuring is broadly indicated by indices of markedness, which reflect conditions of use for specific discourse features and also conventionalized multiple-structure patterns. Inasmuch as conceptualization is not restricted to syntax or even to propositional semantics, even radical differences of micro-level discourse patterns can be compatible with faithfulness in translation, stated here in terms of transferring the author's intended mental representation (see 4).

In conclusion, I mention certain priorities for doing discourse analysis as part of the Bible translation task. The most obvious priority, if the translation is to reach a broad spectrum of readers, is for the translator to

know how natural target-language features work on micro-levels—both single features and multiple-structure patterns. (Although in this article I have concentrated on features involving major syntactic restructuring, all kinds of linguistic signals should be included.) A second priority is to recognize micro-level patterns in the source text, since they are our best prima-facie evidence as to how the author unpacked his intended mental representation in the process of wording. Third, whether the translator is using source-text patterns or target-language patterns on macro-levels, it is important to be aware of both of these, for only then can their differences be recognized. If imported source-language patterns give problems for readers, they need to be modified in the direction of target-language patterns. If target-language patterns are used, they may need to undergo genre modification because of special characteristics of the source text type. All such modifications will likely have prototypes in primary texts in the target language.

A question remains: Do mother-tongue translators (MTTs) need to know the discourse features in their language on a conscious level, or can they be expected to get such features right intuitively, as accomplished story-tellers do with primary texts? The complexity of the Bible translation task argues for conscious knowledge. Simply judging from the time required to produce the text, Bible translation is more than ten times more complex than storytelling. No translator, MTT or otherwise, can expect to get everything right in a single pass; a translator needs to be able to concentrate on different aspects of the translation at different times, and conscious attention requires conscious knowledge—if not in initial drafting, then certainly in revision, checking and problem solving. Discourse features are often dealt with in later passes (though not exclusively there). So should MTTs study discourse? The following answer was given by Mozambican MTTs at the end of a discourse workshop: "Now I want to go back and revise what I have already translated. Now I know how to do it."

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