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When Quality Is in the Eye of the Beholder: Paradigm communities and the certification of standards for judging quality

Kenneth A. McElhanon

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Abstract

This essay addresses the relativity of knowledge and its relevance to the assessment of quality in translation.[1] The discussion is framed in terms of Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigms and paradigm communities. The concept of paradigm is used to delineate the various legacies that inform contemporary translators—their biblical/theological education, their tacit acceptance of an Aristotelian philosophy of language, and the subtle influence of the Age of Enlightenment. Because each model of translation determines the praxis of translation, it also determines how quality is assessed. It is suggested that this is not a serious problem, however, because each model of translation accounts well for particular phenomena of language. A translator is well advised to know the kinds of phenomena that each model handles best. Skill in translation is applying each model to the appropriate phenomena and thereby utilizing any given model to its maximum potential. The burden of responsibility for the quality of a translation falls correctly upon translators and not upon those who check translations.

What are good, reliable, accurate and honest translators to do given the parameters of the translational problem here?

Robert P. Carroll 2002:55

1. Introduction

The issue of *Quality in Bible Translation* is timeless in that it has been discussed for more than two millennia. Douglas Robinson (2002) classifies scholars, from antiquity through the twentieth century, on the basis of whether they are perceived to have supported a literal "word for word" translation or a meaningful "sense-for-sense" one. Moreover, the issue is also latent as the likely backdrop for every argument over translation, whether over the model, the methodology, the style, or the appropriateness of one's exegesis.

[1]This essay is a revised version of a paper presented to BT2005, sponsored by SIL, Inc. and the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, held at the International Linguistic Center, Dallas, Texas, October 16–18, 2005.

Achieving a consensus on the quality of a Bible translation is complicated because the parameters associated with the translation of any sacred text are both numerous and diverse. Much of this complexity resides in the embeddedness of the source texts in inaccessible ancient cultures. It is further complicated, however, by the passion that is evoked when the meaning and significance of a sacred text are perceived to be challenged.

In this essay I will first address the importance of a translator's background and training for the praxis of translation. Then, I will consider the influence upon translators of the doctrine of divine inspiration and the inference that Scripture must therefore be inerrant. Finally, I will frame the discussion of quality in translation around Thomas Kuhn's (1996) theory of paradigms, paradigm communities, and paradigm incommensurability.

2. The Influence of Tacit Legacies

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, scholars in all disciplines have become acutely aware of the influence that their own backgrounds and training have on how they practice their discipline. Theologians refer to this as one's *horizon* (Thiselton 1993) and *preunderstanding* (Osborn 1988). No longer are data to be regarded as autonomously and objectively "out there" to be discovered and interpreted through methodologies that are free of any bias. Translators, however, are often unaware of how much of their own intellectual baggage they carry with them when they begin to translate.

2.1 The Legacy of Western Theological Education

Bible translators typically are not neophytes in their Christian experience. Rather, before beginning serious translation, they are expected to have completed significant training in biblical/theological studies, linguistics, and the praxis of translation. By the time they start translation, however, much of the biblical/theological content has achieved an axiomatic status. As a result, when translators encounter unanticipated linguistic phenomena and seemingly inexplicable cultural behavior, their tendency is to address such matters in ways that neither challenge their biblical and theological understandings nor transcend their training in translation. Rather than subjecting their own familiar concepts to scrutiny, they tend to reframe unfamiliar receptor-language (RL) concepts to bring them into conformity.

For example, Western theologians and translators regard the concepts of *guilt* and *repentance* as essential components of the Christian experience of conversion, and they assume that these concepts are expressed formally in all languages. However, many Papuan languages of the Huon Peninsula Group (PNG) lack any formal expression of these concepts. A person who has stolen something, even when caught in possession of the stolen property, is regarded as socially deviant, not as guilty. By taking something, the person has disrupted a balanced and harmonious relationship and has incurred an obligation that can only be corrected by an act that restores balance and harmony. The individual's responsibility is to restore or otherwise compensate the offended person(s). There is no thought of guilt or repentance. The translator of the Kâte New Testament attempted to retain the concept of repentance, however, by creating a new expression *maŋ bârisie* 'turn one's inside,' reminiscent of "to change one's heart." The Kâte expression, however, means 'to hallucinate,' and Kâte readers are unlikely to relate it in any meaningful way to the act that disrupts a harmonious relationship.

When a language lacks an overt expression of a concept believed to be central to the Gospel message, translators would do well to consider alternative, less direct ways of expressing it. For example, if the thief who restores relational balance and harmony makes an additional commitment to maintain that relationship, that commitment implies the cessation of any disruptive behavior. Such a change in behavior is sufficient to count as implying the biblical concept of repentance. Accordingly, translators have the option to regard the concept of *repentance* as implicit in the act of renewing a commitment and not to attempt to make it overt in the translation.

Western theologians and translators are also stymied when they engage languages that have unfamiliar grammatical features. For example, the structure of transitive verbs in the Papuan languages generally lacks the passive voice. Consequently, the widespread use in the New Testament of the Greek passive voice

presents significant problems for translators working with those languages. To transform a passive into an active voice entails introducing an actor, and often the Greek text yields no explicit information as to who the actor could be. In such cases, the translators have to draw inferences and make reasonable choices. Some translators, however, have contrived novel ways to circumvent such structural features in the RL. For example, apparently to avoid transforming the passive voice to the active and introducing an actor, the translator of the Kâte New Testament constructed unnatural and unwieldy adjectival phrases. The resulting translation was severely deficient in style and presented expressions that no Kâte speaker would ever likely use.

Beyond assumptions that are relevant to one's biblical and theological orientation are those that represent an intellectual legacy. Three components of this legacy are (1) a denigration of figurative language due to the influence of an Aristotelian philosophy of language, (2) a focus on reason and rationality that arose during the eighteenth century Age of Enlightenment, and (3) an understanding of truth through the logical clarification of thoughts as expressed by twentieth century analytic philosophy. Each of these plays a tacit role in favoring a model of essentially literal translation.

2.2 The Legacy of Aristotle: the Loss of Figurative Language

Western philosophy and theology bear the imprint of Aristotelian thought. In discussing the history of how metaphors have been interpreted, Mark Johnson notes Aristotle's seminal role in characterizing metaphor as having "three basic components: (i) focus on single words that are (ii) deviations from literal language, to produce a change of meaning that is (iii) based on similarities between things" (1981:6).

The result has been that so-called literal expressions are regarded as the only legitimate means for declaring truth and depicting reality. Metaphors are regarded as primarily serving to excite emotions.[2] Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida suggest that translators avoid the use of metaphors and express the presumed emotions that the metaphors conveyed to the original readers. For Rev. 2:23 ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἐραυνῶν *νεφροὺς* καὶ *καρδίας* 'I am the one who searches *kidneys* and *hearts'*, they suggest replacing the metaphors with terms expressing the appropriate emotional content as in, 'I am he who searches people's *feelings* and *desires*' (1988:I:321; italics added). Kathleen Callow agrees with this approach,

> But fixed figures, whose reference is not literal [e.g., idioms and certain kinds of metaphors], should not be represented literally in a propositionalisation. Rather, the actual reference should be made clear. Hence, 'She took it in her stride' is the surface-structure expression of *she continued-to-be unperturbed.* (…) Figures of speech can be very difficult to re-express for propositional purposes in nonfigurative language, but it is essential to make the attempt (1998:332).

The weakness in this approach is that it treats each metaphor as autonomous. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) demonstrate, however, that metaphors occur in sets that exhibit systematic relationships. Such sets comprise *conceptual metaphors* that allow us to reason and draw inferences on the basis of mappings between concrete and abstract domains. A widely cited example is ARGUMENT IS WAR in which conversations about argument are couched in war terminology: "Your claims are *indefensible*. He *attacked every weak point* in my argument. His criticisms were *right on target.* He *shot down* all of my arguments." The insights generated by an analysis of conceptual metaphors are regrettably lost when metaphors are replaced with sentences representing what the interpreter regards as the literal senses.

2.3 The Legacy of the Age of Enlightenment—1: rationality, analytic philosophy and propositional truth

Analytic philosophy, as a reaction to nineteenth century idealism, focuses on the logical relationships that are said to pertain between propositions. Furthermore, such propositions are said to be expressed with sentences, and the truth of a sentence is regarded as dependent upon the truth of its underlying proposition. When the sentence came to be regarded as the minimal unit for translation, it was linked with propositions. Callow writes,

[2]See Gibbs (1984, 1989) and Gibbs, et al (1993) for critiques of the notion of literal meaning.

> A proposition represents the simplest possible thought pattern, the weaving together of several concepts in a purposive way…. [P]ropositions are cognitively based, not word based; one proposition underlies the various expressions in different languages. The concepts, therefore, which combine to form the proposition, are at a cognitive level which relates to experiences not to words. Words follow later (1998:154–55).

Moreover, propositions are frequently regarded as expressing pure thought, and so truth is regarded as propositional in nature and is associated with the literal expression of fact. Norman Geisler writes,

> Communication depends on informative statements. But correspondence to facts is what makes statements informative. *All communication ultimately depends on something being literally or factually true*. We cannot even use a metaphor unless we understand that there is a literal meaning over against which the figurative sense is not literal. So, it would follow that all communication depends in the final analysis on a correspondence to truth (1999:742; italics added).

In McElhanon (2006) I suggest, however, that the biblical conceptual metaphors TRUTH IS A ROAD and EXPERIENCING A LIFE OF FAITH IS GOING ON A JOURNEY exhibit gestalt characteristics with a meaning that transcends the meanings of its component metaphors. An analysis of conceptual metaphors reveals that the biblical concept of truth is primarily *experiential*, more about HOW Christians live, rather than merely *rational*, only about WHAT Christians say.[3] It is significant that the apostle John links *truth* with *actions* in opposition to *words*: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18). The fact that conceptual metaphors may have gestalt characteristics militates against the practice of removing metaphors from translations.

2.4 The Legacy of the Age of Enlightenment—2: scholasticism and the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy

The doctrine of divine inspiration has been said to imply the doctrine of biblical inerrancy (Dockery 1987:38). Typically, the doctrine of inerrancy is based upon an analogy with God's perfection and veracity (Nicole 1980:75) or derived on the basis of syllogisms (Geisler 1992:22). Clark Pinnock questions, however, whether the doctrine of inerrancy is a necessary inference from that of inspiration (1977:64).

The importance of these twin doctrines for translation lies in their independence from any given model of translation. Together they have had a profound influence on how much latitude a translator exercises in the praxis of translation.[4] In its most restrictive form, inspiration is associated with words rather than with concepts. Four articles of the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (Geisler 1980:493–502; Youngblood 1984:230–239) are particularly relevant:

> Article VI: "We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration."
>
> Article X: "We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original."
>
> Article XI: "We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible…."
>
> Article XII: "We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit."

A commitment to these articles reinforces the tendency to regard the entry point for Bible translation to be the very *words* of Scripture. Article VI places the focus directly on words. Article X contains an implicit caution against diverging from the wording of the putative original manuscripts. Article XI injects a sense of awe into the praxis of translation, and Article XII reinforces Article X with the claim of absolute, propositional truth (Youngblood 1984:235–239). Ironically, the exposition of Article X states, "Similarly, no translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the *autographa*"

[3] I have addressed this in greater detail in McElhanon (2005 and 2007).

[4] I maintain that the principles of translation do not differ from those attributed to hermeneutics as used by theologians, because theologians typically interpret texts in some language other than their own. As such, the acts of interpretation (hermeneutics) and translation are coterminous.

(Youngblood 1984:239). This statement appears not to take seriously the fact that the synoptic Gospel accounts themselves are generally regarded as translations of either an Aramaic or Hebrew source.[5]

The association of inerrancy with accuracy is in a large measure the outgrowth of historical scholasticism reinforced by the assumptions of the enlightenment. Addressing the scholastic tradition, theologian Donald Bloesch notes, "The scholastic understands the Bible as a book of revealed truths or revealed propositions. (…) In scholastic theology faith is basically an intellectual assent to propositional truth. (…) According to scholastic theology the Bible has absolute infallibility or total inerrancy" (1994:42–44).[6]

To associate inerrancy with factuality and accuracy only leads one to become embroiled in controversy regarding such matters as whether inerrancy is total or in some way limited, whether it applies only to the putatively original sayings of Jesus, only to the original manuscripts, or perhaps also, in some derivative sense, to translations such as the Septuagint. Moreover, does its scope include historical matter or should it be limited only to salvific concerns? Any association of inerrancy with the formal aspects of Scripture results in seemingly endless attempts to account for the complexity found in the phenomena of Scripture. Clark Pinnock observes, "To defend it [inerrancy] in a way that does not evade the phenomena of the text requires incredible dexterity and ingenuity" (1977:66).

Almost every definition of inerrancy that is proposed by a diversity of scholars carries along caveats that limit its scope. Pinnock observes further that the concept of inerrancy has too many qualifications, "Inerrancy, as applied by many of its scholarly exponents, is actually hedged about by numerous exceptions. A purported 'error' has a number of hurdles to jump before it can qualify as an error" (1977:64).[7] Michaels observes, "Rather than questioning the doctrine of inerrancy as badly motivated by the assumptions of the enlightenment, many theologians have opted for some sort of limited inerrancy, a concept regarded by inerrantists as 'a contradiction of terms'" (1980:55).

As noted by Pinnock, our understanding of inspiration and inerrancy has to account for the phenomena of Scripture. Accordingly, inspiration may be better understood broadly so as to account for how God superintended the incorporation of various materials in the formation of the Bible. Scripture's self-attestation, i.e., what God says about Scripture, may be elaborated on by examining how God acted in superintending its compilation and transmission. Michaels suggests that the measure of the inerrancy we confess must be in accord with what God did. "We have no right to assume that what He intended to do is different from what He did do. He has given us a revelation which conforms to our standards of precision only in part. The role of faith is to accept this revelation on His terms, not ours" (1980:63).

It is well known that the quality of translation in the Septuagint varies widely. Moises Silva , noting how Heb. 11:21 quotes Gen. 47:31 in the Septuagint, acknowledges that the Septuagint translators assumed different vowels for the Hebrew and misinterpreted Hebrew *mth* as *matteh* 'staff' rather than correctly as *mittah* 'bed' (1983:162). Thus, the writer of Hebrews, by quoting the Septuagint, introduces a historical error, albeit a very minor one. Moreover, Donald Hagner notes that Mark 4:12 quotes the Targum of Jonathan for Isaiah 6:9 in preference to the Masoretic and Septuagint texts (1976:85–86). Our understanding of inspiration has to account for God having inspired the writer of Mark to prefer non-biblical over canonical material in compiling his Gospel account.

Similarly, our concept of inerrancy has to account for phenomena such as that displayed in Table A. The writers of the synoptic accounts record in their Greek translations a presumed single event recorded in the source language (SL), whether Aramaic or Hebrew, namely, that Jesus perceived the motivation behind the plans of the Pharisees and Herodians to do him harm.

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[5]Most theologians assume that the language spoken in the Mediterranean basin in the first century was Aramaic. This assumption is so strong that the translators of the NIV ignore the fact that the Greek manuscripts support Ἑβραΐδι 'Hebrew' in Acts 21:40, 22:2, and 26:14. Rather, they translate it as "Aramaic" with footnotes indicating "(possibly) *Hebrew*." David Bivin and Roy Blizzard (1983), however, give a cogent argument for Hebrew as a source. Randall Buth (2000) also favors Hebrew over Aramaic.

[6]Chicago Statement Article XVI reads, "We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism" (Geisler 1980:497).

[7]Also see Walter Kaiser, Jr.'s remarks as to what is meant by a "contradiction" (1988:69–70).

Matthew 22:18 "But Jesus,		**knowing their evil intent"**	**["to trap him," vs. 15]**
γνοὺς	δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς	τὴν **πονηρίαν** αὐτῶν	ὅπως αὐτὸν **παγιδεύσωσιν**
'**knowing**'	'But Jesus'	'**evil intent** their'	'so that **they might trap** him'
Mark 12:15 "But Jesus knew		their hypocrisy"	["to catch him," vs. 13]
ὁ δὲ	**εἰδὼς**	αὐτῶν τὴν **ὑπόκρισιν**	ἵνα αὐτὸν **ἀγρεύσωσιν**
'But Jesus'	'knew'	'their **hypocrisy**'	'in order to **catch** him'
Luke 20:23 "He saw through		their duplicity"	["to capture him," vs. 20]
κατανοήσας δὲ		αὐτῶν τὴν **πανουργίαν**	ἵνα **ἐπιλάβωνται**
'He **saw through**'		'their **duplicity**'	'in order to **capture** him'

Table A: Conceptual imprecision and lexical variation

How are we to account for these differences? It is not sufficient to relegate them to a mystery that is purported to account for such matters as the writers' different backgrounds, culture, personal training, language, and individuality (Nicole 1980:71–72). Nor may we simply attribute them, as is often done, to differences in the writers' personalities and literary styles. Article VII of the *Chicago Statement* reads, "We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities." What possible role might their personalities have in how they used the "very words that He chose"? What inference is one to draw from these "very words" in Table A? One possible inference could be that God brought to the consciousness of each of the writers an imprecise recollection of the event and expected them to express adequately the main thrust of that event. All the readers of these passages would have had to recognize is that Jesus was aware of the nefarious motives of the Pharisees and Herodians. The writers faithfully recorded that event, and the variation in how they did so is only a problem for contemporary interpreters who have an unrealistic and unwarranted concept of inspiration and inerrancy, one that requires them to devise ad hoc solutions when the data conflict. In the synoptic passages noted in Table A each author expresses in Greek a single underlying thought in the SL. Each chose a different verb expressing perception (γινώσκω, οἶδα, and κατανοέω), a different noun expressing intent (πονηρία, ὑπόκρισις, and πανουργία), and a different verb expressing the goal (παγιδεύω, ἀγρεύω, and ἐπιλαμβάνομαι). These choices militate against defining inspiration in terms of the production of inerrant words. Rather, the words may be regarded as accurately expressing what took place, with the recognition that accuracy is a graded concept. It would seem ill-advised to frame inspiration and inerrancy in any way that is not transparently sanctioned by such phenomena of Scripture.

I suggest that, in light of such phenomena, and in the context of translation, the concept of inerrancy is perhaps better defined as the writers having *adequately* expressed the message that God inspired them to write. This is in harmony with J. I. Packer's comment on the adequacy of language. Packer writes, "God's statement to Jeremiah, 'I have to put my words in your mouth' (1:9), gives the theological paradigm of what is involved: God causes His message to enter into a man's mind, by psychological processes that are in part opaque to us, so that the man may then faithfully relay the message to others" (1980:198). With a focus on faithfulness, one may regard a redefined inerrancy as the human *reflex* of inspiration. Inspiration flows from God as the process by which He infuses a concept or message in the minds of His spokespersons. Inerrancy flows in the opposite direction back to God as the verification that the message was adequately received and faithfully expressed in language.

Those who concur with the way that inspiration and inerrancy are framed in the *Chicago Statement* also exercise a fair amount of faith. This is so because of the hedges that purport to resolve the contradictory phenomena of Scripture. One hedge is the claim that inspiration and inerrancy only apply to non-existent original manuscripts (Article X). Instead of the original manuscripts, theologians have an idealization of

what they think those manuscripts would have been like, and what they think they would have been like is too often derived analogically or syllogistically from their concept of God. Another is that the recalcitrant phenomena of Scripture that challenge the framing of inerrancy are held in abeyance with a faith that hopes for their ultimate resolution.

In retrospect, freeing translators from the conceptual shackles imposed by the twin legacies of an Aristotelian philosophy of language and an enlightenment era rationality frees them from being slavishly bound to the wording of the SL text. It also allows translators a greater latitude in choosing among the various models of translation and deciding when to use each.

2.5 The Legacy of the Code Model of Communication (CMC): What Goes In Must Come Out.

Models of translation give the appearance of being dependent upon some version of the CMC.[8] If a dependency upon the CMC does not become apparent during the process of translation, it certainly does during the process of checking a translation for accuracy and fidelity—the basis for judgments of quality. The significance of the CMC for the issue of quality in Bible translation is that it invokes the concept of translation equivalence—that in some way an entity in the text of the receptor language (RL) has to be equivalent to a corresponding entity in the text of the source language (SL).

In McElhanon (2005) I note how developments in the modeling of translation mirror the evolution of linguistic theory. For millennia, philosophers have focused on the relation between words and ideas, i.e., between forms and meanings. The Age of Exploration led to the discovery of ancient manuscripts and a growing interest in comparative and historical linguistics. From the seventeeth century, as manuscripts from earlier stages of Indo-European languages were discovered, philologists compared the words to reconstruct proto-Indo-European forms. At the same time, theologians began to trace etymologies to determine the full sense of any given word. Early Bible translators, who were typically theologians, focused on words and produced more literal translations.[9]

The modern day focus on the meanings of words reached its zenith following the 1950s when anthropologists developed a system of distinctive semantic features that were analogous to the distinctive phonological features developed by phonologists. Both systems were regarded as broadly scientific in as much as they were analogous to the chemists' periodic chart of the elements.[10] The assumption for semantics was that the meaning of any word could be wholly decomposed into a limited set of universal semantic features by the application of the method of componential analysis (Goodenough 1956; Frake 1962). In spite of its inadequacies (Fillmore 1975), componential analysis has served translators for decades and is still widely used as the primary method for asserting putative lexical equivalence (Newmark 1988).

Next, when linguists focused on sentence grammar, translators chose the sentence to be the minimal unit for translation (Crystal 1965; Nida & Tabor 1969). Having the sentence as the minimal unit was useful in as much as, like the word, it had rather discrete boundaries. Moreover, it was linked with propositions. As a result, propositional analysis became an essential component in text books for Bible translation (Beekman & Callow 1974, Larson 1998; Callow 1998), and propositional displays have been prepared for many of the New Testament books in the "Semantic Structure Analyses" series published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Dallas, TX). Subsequently, as linguistic analysis expanded to include the levels of paragraph and discourse, the range of data that was considered relevant for translation also expanded. By the 1980s, Albrecht Neubert (1986:89) writes of *textual* equivalence, but then later (1989:154) distinguishes between *textual* and *pragmatic* equivalence. M. Baker (1992) writes of *grammatical*, *textual*, and *pragmatic* equivalence.

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[8]Eugene Nida promoted the CMC, first in support of a principled basis for Bible translation (1959), and then, in support of a general approach to cross-cultural communication (1960).

[9]James Barr (2004) addresses the etymological fallacy, the notion that the real meaning of a word is to be found by tracing its meaning back to its original, and presumably more basic sense.

[10]A contemporary version of this is Anna Wierzbicka's proposal of a Natural Semantic Metalanguage that consists of a limited set of words as semantic primes (Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, Wierzbicka 1996).

2.6 The Legacy of Thomas Kuhn's Concept of Paradigms and Paradigm Communities: Quality Assessment and the Relativity of Knowledge

That the development of models of translation mirrors the evolution of linguistic theory raises the question of the objectivity of standards for assessing quality. Thomas Kuhn (1996) demonstrates how, within any given discipline, assessments of quality are made by a given community of like-minded scholars who have an allegiance to a given disciplinary paradigm.[11] For our discussion, the paradigms are the linguistic theories and their associated models of translation, and the communities of scholars are the translators who are committed to a given model of translation. In what follows I will attempt to integrate the models of translation posited by Albrecht Neubert and Gregory Shreve (1992) with the entities and stages that Kuhn posits in his theory of paradigm shift.

The central features of Kuhn's model relevant to the assessment of quality in Bible translation are:

1. *Research priorities are determined by a community of scholars, who*

- teach their theory and any associated model to new students through a stock of standard examples that best reflect normative practice,
- determine which kind of research projects those students may carry out, and
- function like members of a club in that they establish membership requirements such as the articles of faith, control the journals in which new scholars may publish, and demand a commitment to uphold the club's practices and standards.

Neubert and Shreve's *practical model* is relevant at this point because it focuses on the processes of translation—the resources and methodology utilized to achieve the RL text—and makes explicit the exegetical and hermeneutical practices of the translator. Of equal importance, however, is the reality that the exegetical and hermeneutical practices of the checker may be quite divergent from those of the translator. Since the checker typically operates from a position of power, the checker's exegetical and hermeneutical practices may remain latent.

Relevance Theory (RT) has been promoted within the SIL/WBT family of organizations as the preferred model for translation. Seminars in RT are being given to consultants and consultant trainees, and a manual in RT is under development for training mother-tongue translators. It is currently undergoing refinement through workshops attended by mother-tongue translators.

The presumed benefits of having a single model include (1) a standardized curriculum for training (mother-tongue) translators, (2) a uniform metric for consultants to use in checking translations, and (3) a greater agreement among consultants when addressing controversial practices. On the one hand, translators would likely not have to contend with uninformed consultants, and on the other, consultants would likely not have to endure translators who seek second opinions. The cost exacted by a commitment to a single model, however, is a loss in imagination and creativity.

2. *Any given model of translation is relative because it alone*

- defines the nature of the data that are worthy of analysis,
- poses those questions that are important enough to ask, and
- limits the kinds of explanations that can be suggested.

Both Neubert and Shreve's *linguistic* and *critical* models are relevant here. The linguistic model is highly dependent upon the underlying theory of linguistics in that it focuses on what are perceived to be the significant linguistic resources of the SL and TL and on how they may be utilized in bridging the differences between the languages. Typically, translators depend heavily upon a linguistic model in translation.

[11]Kuhn's model has subsequently been applied to a wide range of disciplines including biology (Judson 1996), chemistry (McEvoy 2000; Morris 2002), missions (Bosch 1981), physics (Casper & Noer 1972; Chen & Jasna 2003), psychology (Baars 1986, Miller 2003), and theology (Küng 1988; Küng & Tracy 1991).

In checking a translation, however, it is the *critical* model that is relevant. This model focuses on the RL text and how it may be rendered to approximate the SL text. Differences between the linguistic models of the translator and checker are important because the checker may ask questions that are irrelevant to the translator's practices. The translation check may not meet the expectations of the translator, and the results of the check may be compromised.

The choice of a model is central to the issue of quality in translation because it carries with it an evaluative metric. For example, those who model their translation praxis on the 1950s model of linguistics define accuracy and fidelity in terms of how well the sense of a word in the RL matches that in the SL. This perspective drives the current debate over biblical inerrancy and the introduction to the American market of the TNIV, the inclusive-language edition of the NIV.

Central to the debate on inerrancy is the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*. A strong commitment to the statement may render the interpreter/translator prone to focus on presumed literal senses of words that are regarded as "the very words of God." The linguistic basis for what is regarded as an "essentially literal translation" is almost non-existent. Andreas Kostenberger cites "textual issues, questions of background or chronology, and ideological, exegetical, and stylistic matters," but does not include linguistic issues (2003:347). According to Leland Ryken, an essentially literal translation "strives to translate the exact words of the original text in a translation, but not in such a rigid way as to violate the normal rules of language and syntax" of the RL (2002:19; cf. Grudem & Thacker 2005:9).[12] Those who are committed to a model of translation that supports so-called essentially literal translations pay scant attention to other linguistic matters such as those of semantic markedness, conceptual metonymy, conceptual metaphor, conceptual blending, inferential structure, paragraph coherence, and discourse cohesion.

The recent reaction by conservative theologians against English versions that use gender-inclusive language, particularly the TNIV, is illustrative. Since gender is relevant to word-level semantics, the arguments against the TNIV necessarily focus on the meaning of a word in its literary context with scant, if any, consideration given to important linguistic and cultural issues. Mark Strauss suggests that "all research in New Testament should be examined and critiqued by linguists and Bible translators, and all research in Bible translation should be examined and critiqued by biblical scholars" (2003:137, note 1).

Professional linguists and anthropologists have rarely, if ever, been represented on the committees that produced English Bible translations. This omission is likely due to large numbers of theologians being generally suspicious of the findings of behavioral scientists. Regarding linguists, Carl Henry cautions, "Modern linguistic theories ought not to be accorded infallibility merely because of their modernity. . . . Their ruling tenet is that the limitations of language render language useless for many purposes long attributed to it. The sufficiency of human thought-forms and word-forms is under constant fire by a theory that, in explaining ideation and language, not only erodes their utility in respect to knowledge of God, but also considers God irrelevant from the outset" (1979:290). Wolfhart Pannenberg points out that anthropology rid metaphysics from the study of human nature and led to "a metaphysically neutral and uninhibitedly secular conception of the human being." Consequently he questions theological methods that draw upon what amounts to a "nontheological" anthropology and claims, "how ambivalent a procedure it would in fact be to try to base a Christian dogmatics on conceptions of the human person that arose in the course of a turning away from Christian dogma" (1985:17–20). Had the theologians attacking the use of gender-inclusive language enquired of a linguist, they may have obviated Mark Strauss's observation that "the opponents of inclusive language . . . were making what appeared to be very naïve linguistic errors" (2003:116).

Those committed to the view that truth can only be expressed propositionally in sentences that are understood literally have elevated the word-level model of literal translation over all others. This is true for translators working in minority languages as well as for those addressing existing English translations. It is noteworthy that those minority-language translators who choose to adopt models of more literal translation complete their translation projects in far less time than it takes for translators who choose to adopt more

[12] Many of D. A. Carson's (1984) insights on exegetical fallacies are relevant to the arguments that purportedly support an essentially literal translation.

dynamic models. Essentially literal translation is much easier because the model is narrowly scoped in what it selects as phenomena relevant to translation. Truncating the relevant data, however, is likely to result in skewed content.

Recently, there has been a spate of apologies for essentially literal translation (Grudem 2000, Grudem & Thacker 2005, Grudem, et al. 2006, Poythress & Grudem 2004, 2005; Ryken 2002, 2004, 2005). Ryken lists five "criteria for excellence in Bible translation," of which the last four have the appearance of subjectivity: (1) Fidelity to the Words of the Original,[13] (2) Effective Diction: Clarity, Vividness, Connotation, Ambiguity,[14] (3) Respect for the Principles of Poetry,[15] (4) Effective Rhythm, and (5) Exaltation and Beauty. In endorsing Ryken, Bruce Ware writes,

> How odd to live in a time when biblical scholars labor over the very words of Scripture (in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) to understand Scripture's meaning, and at the same time many of the same biblical scholars endorse a translation theory of the Bible in which the 'ideas' or 'concepts' of Scripture are used for translating Scripture's meaning in another language. Ryken's *Word of God in English* demonstrates clearly and forcefully that the widespread practice of 'dynamic equivalence' in translation takes us away from the part of careful, accurate, faithful rendering of the very words of God for English readers (Ryken 2002:1).[16]

Ryken assuredly would reject Neubert and Shreve's *sociocultural* model because it is associated with translation as only an approximation to the original and as only achieving a level of adequacy. Nevertheless, the model is relevant to some of the concerns expressed by Ryken (2002), first in that it tends to preserve the otherness of translated texts by retaining in the RL text what are regarded as essential features of the SL text (see Ryken 2002:173–186) and second, in that Neubert and Shreve denigrate dynamic/functional equivalent models for doing violence to the SL text (see Ryken 2002:79–102).

Kenneth Barker, in defense of the NIV, cites *balance* as the essential criterion of quality: "*Translate it correctly*, that is, with the best *balance* between faithfulness to the original languages *and* faithfulness to the English language. Such a *balance* approach is the surest path to *accuracy* in translation" (1996:103). Three years later, he specifies *balance* to include balance in the translation committee, in the textual basis, in a philosophy of translation, and in the selection of available resources (1999:95).

3. *The majority of research in translation may be regarded as normal and customary.*

- Normally researchers choose to account for phenomena that are prescribed by the approved model of translation.
- Researchers are constrained to force intractable data into the categories supplied by the model or interpret them with model-specific processes.
- Researchers do not question the fundamental assumptions.

Bible translators who are committed to a given model often devote their research energies to making incremental changes to the model. Those who question the fundamental assumptions are simply ignored. Thus, many translators live in enclaves of the like-minded and have scant interaction with those who propose other models. This is unfortunate because most models of translation account very well for some kinds of data, but less well for other kinds. The RT model, for example, is regarded as excellent in

[13]Kenneth Barker notes that a literal understanding of Moses' claim to be "uncircumcised of lips" (Exodus 6:12) and "slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10) would lead one to think that Moses had a speech impediment. "Rather," says Barker, "he felt that he was not eloquent or quick-witted enough to respond to the pharaoh. The literal expression used here is an excellent illustration of the fact that 'literal' does not always equal 'accurate,' because at times it can be confusing and even misleading (inaccurate)" (1999:63).

[14]George Dunbar's (2001) essay on polysemy, ambiguity, and vagueness is relevant to Ryken's claims regarding the meanings of words.

[15]For insights into poetry from a cognitive linguistic perspective, see Lakoff & Turner (1989) and Gibbs (1994).

[16]Other names on the endorsement pages are Gordon Wenham, J. I. Packer, John MacArthur, R. Kent Hughes, Neil Nielson, Wayne Grudem, G. I. Williamson, W. Bingham Hunter, Marvin Olasky, Paul T. McCain, Kathleen Buswell Nielson, and John Belz. Their comments alone are interesting for their stridency and lack of candor. Not all printings of Ryken (2002), however, include these endorsements.

accounting for implicatures, but it has little to offer with regard to understanding the motivation for figurative language, particularly conceptual metaphors, metonymies, and blends. Models that are based in decompositional semantics also fail to account satisfactorily for figurative language. This is true, whether the model is based in the traditional theory of compositional analysis or in the contemporary theory of *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994; Wierzbicka 1996). Similarly, those translators, who focus on a model dominated by the features of higher-level grammar and discourse structure, may overlook lower-level features that translators committed to other models regard as crucial. It is important for translators to be conversant with all models and neglect none.

4. *Data are discovered that do not fit neatly into the approved theory and model.*

- Their anomalous status typically leads the theorists of the approved theory to trivialize them or regard them as irrelevant.
- Initially such anomalous data are set aside or accommodated by ad hoc modifications that enable the practitioners to retain the model.
- In time the reservoir of anomalous data grows to the point that it cannot be ignored. Eventually one or more practitioners, usually younger ones, question the assumptions that led the leaders of the community to eschew the data. They begin to formulate fresh approaches to account for these data.
- These fresh approaches may lead to a new theory and model, a new way to look at the same collection of data, with new definitions, new questions to be asked, and new explanations.
- Some practitioners reject the previous model in favor of the new one. In so doing they shift their allegiance to a new community. Kuhn likens this "paradigm shift" to an expression of faith and a conversion experience.
- The established, older community of scholars generally resists such changes. The new community prevails either through the conversion of the older generation or simply by out-living them. With the acceptance of the new theory and model, the new community of practitioners begins to carry out research that quickly assumes the status of normal and customary.

Herein lay the seeds for disciplinary revolutions. The stage is set for conflicts to arise between the "old guard" and the "young turks." The issuance of the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* has all the hallmarks of such a scenario. On the one hand, a community of like-minded, older theologians, when confronted by anomalous data, seek to trivialize such data or declare its irrelevancy. On the other hand, an emerging community of younger scholars is beginning to reappraise the axioms that constrained creativity within the community of older theologians.

In the discipline of translation, as translators addressed linguistic analyses of increasingly larger corpora of data, they extended their models of translation. The result has been an incremental expansion of the linguistic theories and translation models. There has been no true revolution. Moreover, there is little likelihood that there will be a widespread revolution among the community of those who translate Scripture into minority languages. This is largely due to that community consisting of people who highly value their individualism. Translation theorists may recommend and defend a given model, but those who are engaged in translation may not take their recommendations seriously. There will always be significant numbers of translators who ignore acclaimed advancements, retain outmoded models of translation, and quietly go about their work. Doing so becomes problematic, however, when their translations are checked by those who have kept in step with the maturation of the discipline.

5. *Competing theories are incommensurable with one another.*

- In a Sapir-Whorfian sense those who work with differing theories and in differing models "do not speak the same language."
- Translators committed to rival models regard as relevant quite dissimilar sorts of data. The very features which are important for one may be incidental to the other.
- They begin translation at different levels.

This has been one of the most hotly debated features of Kuhn's theory. Are theories of linguistics and models of translation so different that they have no overlap? Kuhn believed that scientific theories had no overlap, and he argued against Karl Popper who "pressed very strongly the notion that later theories embrace earlier theories. I [i.e., Kuhn] can remember him doing a diagram on the board in which each new theory covered everything that an older theory covered, and more besides" (Borridori 1994:159).What Kuhn was thinking of when he made this statement was a comparison of theories of physics. "In different paradigms," according to Kuhn, "the same words 'signify' different things; so different, in fact, that the paradigms are to be considered reciprocally 'incommensurable'" (Borridori 1994:154–55). For Kuhn, incommensurability was untranslatability.

It may be true that scientists cannot operate simultaneously in different paradigms. Such is not the case with translators, however. The nature of language is so complex that the task of translation is necessarily multifaceted. Each level of language, from morphology through discourse units, has its unique characteristics that are amenable to distinct approaches. Thus, each of the models proposed by Neubert and Shreve has a role in the praxis of translation.

3. Conclusion

Quality in translation is one of those issues that at the threshold of the twenty-first century may have been discussed a number of times too often. Nothing is perhaps a more certain indication that an issue is irresolvable than that through the ages it has been debated again and again. Genuinely resolvable issues do not persist for millennia.

One may suppose that quality control and assessment would be enhanced by reducing the number of models recommended to translators. Superficially, it would seem that doing so would militate against the current wide diversity in the praxis of translation, that many translators do "that which is right in their own eyes." Such a move, however, would likely introduce constraints that would have a negative impact in the level of quality, because different levels of language require different models of translation.

Translators are well advised to know the kind of data that each model handles best. *Skill in translation is applying each model to the appropriate data and thereby utilizing each model to its maximum potential.* The burden of responsibility falls upon translators not to eschew any model, but to be proficient in all and to apply each of them conscientiously. Those who do not do so are likely to produce translations which, when checked for faithfulness, are found to be deficient.

Because the translator has the pivotal role in the praxis of translation and the ultimate responsibility for the quality of a translation, perhaps quality in translation is ultimately best approached by taking a clue from the debate over inspiration and inerrancy. An aspect of that debate has been over the roles of both the original translators of Scripture, as in the synoptic Gospel accounts, and of the original composers of the epistles and other portions. Both groups were inspired by God to communicate his message, and their responsibility was to be faithful in providing an adequate expression of that message. With regard to contemporary translators, we may regard their motivation to translate as analogous to the inspiration of the original writers. Moreover, the responsibility of the original writers to be faithful to their task ought to be matched by the desire of contemporary translators to be similarly faithful. Translators have an awesome responsibility as bearers of a divine message and should give nothing less than their best to it.

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