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Politeness Strategies in Biblical Hebrew and West African Languages

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Abstract

Most languages have a wide variety of strategies for communicating politeness, however these are always highly culture-specific and relate closely to broader cultural norms that affect the application of Grice's maxims, for example.

Focus strategies include the use of greetings, modal particles, and various forms of participant reference. Typical initial greetings may take the form of wishes or blessings in biblical Hebrew but questions in West African languages (which reserve wishes and blessings for leave-taking and thanking); therefore, more literal translations may invite misunderstanding. Pragmatic particles in biblical Hebrew are often misunderstood. West African languages may lack these altogether, and so they have to resort to longer idiomatic expressions. Participant reference in biblical Hebrew may involve metaphors from service or kinship terminology; these may combine with special uses of grammatical person in honorific addressee-reference and deprecating self-reference. Some of these observations may shed light on features of the Psalms which have traditionally been read more as poetics than as pragmatics.

Indirection strategies may be employed in the form of euphemisms or Indirect Speech Acts, the most common form of which in biblical Hebrew is the rhetorical question, which may have a range of pragmatically-defined functions, though the forms may differ from those of West African languages.

The two primary biblical Hebrew verbal conjugations also have special pragmatically-defined functions, including the restriction of deontic use of *qāṭal* (the 'precative perfect') to human address of God, restriction of deontic use of *yiqṭōl* (the 'preceptive imperfect') to divine address of humans, and the use of *yiqṭōl* in questions. West African languages may need to resort to a wide variety of strategies to express such modal nuances.

These notes raise questions as to the extent to which translators may "Africanize" the speech of actants in biblical narratives.

1. Introduction

Politeness strategies may sometimes receive a sophisticated morphological encoding, as in Japanese, but they usually depend more heavily on pragmatic functions such as conversational implicatures and Indirect Speech Acts. The use of those strategies is prescribed by features of social status, all interpreted in highly culture-specific ways.

Just as some universals have been proposed for communication in general, most famously Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner, so some basic universals have been claimed to hold for

[1] This paper was first presented in the section Politeness Strategies and Translation at the UBS Triennial Translation Workshop 2003, Iguaçu, Brazil; it has since benefited from input from Ernst Wendland and unnamed reviewers of *The Bible Translator* and *Journal of Translation*.

politeness, such as those tending to involve longer utterances, more silence, less interruption, less topic-change and less physical touch.[2] Such features are highly culture-specific, however, and the most minute details of our own cultural codes may be exposed when we are exposed to others. Thus, for example, the maxim of *quality* means something different in a Europe where "honesty" means telling factual truth, from in West Africa where "honesty" may mean (as in seventeenth-century French) being polite and saying what one believes would most please the addressee. Similarly, the maxim of *quantity* means something different within the low expectations of informativeness of Finnish culture and the higher expectations of Italians. And the terms used in Grice's maxim of *manner*—"obscurity," "ambiguity," "brevity," "orderliness"—are seen to be highly culture-specific when a northern European tries to communicate with a West African.

This same cultural relativity applies to politeness strategies, and a few distinctives of West African communicative expectations may be mentioned here. Firstly, there is a "default for non-communication" such that silence is easily tolerated, especially from a junior,[3] from whom it is actually expected as a mark of respect (cf., also Job 32:4). Secondly, almost any act of communication may be interpreted as requiring a response from the addressee, such that any expression of preference may be understood as a request that this preference be met.[4] Thirdly, asking a question is often considered as equivalent to issuing a mand (since questions require answers just as mands require action), and is therefore principally the right of the senior.[5] In the light of these observations, the efforts of well-meaning young Europeans to "make polite conversation"—usually in the form of asking questions and expressing opinions—with their senior West African hosts would be amusing if they were not so insulting!

Against this background, I consider here a range of politeness strategies in biblical Hebrew [hbo] and West African languages [ls-wa], noting some pitfalls and possibilities for translation. Particular attention will be paid to the issuing of questions and mands, since these are the kinds of utterances which potentially destabilize the social order, and so need to be "hedged" or "mitigated" with "face-saving" strategies.[6] The corpus centers on conversational contexts in narrative texts, including especially the narratives of Ruth, Hannah (1Sa 1–2) and Abigail (1Sa 25:24–34). The [ls-wa] cited here come mostly from Ghana and Nigeria, especially those best known to me—Birifor [biv], Berom [bom] and Hausa [hau].

2. Focus Strategies

One of the most common strategies for politeness in both [hbo] and [ls-wa] is the prefacing of an utterance with some other element which takes the focus away from the interrogative or deontic (volitional) force. This strategy may be achieved with a greeting, modal particle, participant reference, or redundant reference to a speech act. Prototypically, greetings and participant reference occur at the start of an entire conversation to establish social relations or "phatic communion" before other communication begins. However, some greetings (e.g., the ubiquitous [hau] interjection *Sannu!*), and most forms of participant reference (e.g., [eng-wa] *sir*, [hbo] אמתך 1Sa 1:11 [3x]; אדני המלך 2Sa 19:27–29 [4x]) may occur repeatedly when the social status gap (e.g., Hannah-God, Mephibosheth-David) or the mand issued is particularly big. Many of our findings reveal implications for our understanding of [hbo] prayer and Psalms.

2.1 Greetings

[ls-wa] greetings may include interjections, explicit performatives, imperatives, statements, and polar and content questions relating to health. They may be modified by reference to time of day or the addressee's current activity and accompanied by a range of gestures and forms of gift giving:

[2] Some of these are from Saville-Troike, *Ethnography*.
[3] The terms "junior" and "senior" are used here to refer to social status roles, irrespective of age.
[4] In other words, statements may be understood as mands (see on Indirect Speech Acts in section 3. Indirection Strategies).
[5] "Mand" is the cover-term (coined by Skinner and popularized by Lyons 1977) for utterances such as commands and requests; questions are often analyzed by linguists as a sub-type of mands.
[6] Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to them as "face-threatening acts."

Agoo!	(Arriving at a house) Anyone in?	[aka]
Yaan yaan!—Yaan lɛ!	(Welcoming) Hello!—Hello!	[biv]
Gbrrr!—Lɛ lɛ lɛ!	(Starting a folk story)	[biv]
A dãbiã o!—Puorfo lɛ!	Fear! (i.e., Why have you come?)—It's to greet!	[biv]
N puor fʊ naa!—N sɔɔ naa!	I greet you!—I respond!	[biv]
Yı sɔɔ wɛ!—Sı sɔɔ naa!	Respond!—We respond!	[biv]
ŋmina ta yɛ!	The sun has reached you!	[wlx]
Fʊ 'bãa naa?—N 'bãa naa!	Are you cool?—I am cool!	[biv]
A fʊ yir tara kãa?—A tara kãa!	Does your household have oil?—It has oil!	[biv]
Ala fwom mo ɛ?—Ma feng a Dagwi!	How is your work?—I thank God!	[bom]
Yɛ dɛwo be sõ?—A be sõ!	Your house is good?—It is good!	[wlx]
Wo hõ te sẽ?—Me hõ yɛ!	Your body is how?—My body is good!	[aka]
Meda wo ase!	I lie under you! (i.e., Thank you!)	[aka]
Ina gajiya?—Ba gajiya!	How is your tiredness?—There is no tiredness!	[hau]
Fʊ mõtõɔ wɛ?—Lãfıɛ lɛ!	Your afternoon?—It's fine!	[biv]

[ls-eur] initial greetings tend to be in the form of optatives, followed by questions:

Evening! … How're you doing?	(May you have a good)[7] …	[eng-uk]
Bonjour! … Comment ça va?	(May you have a) Good day! … How is it going?	[fra]
Доброе утро … Как дела?	(May you have a) Good morning! … How does (it)?	[rus]
Grüezi! … Wie gaht's?	May (God) bless you! … How is it going?	[gsw]

Similarly, [hbo] initial greetings are often in the form of optatives, in line with one of the common terms corresponding to 'to greet'—ברך:

יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם ... יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה	(May) YHWH (be) with you!—May YHWH bless you! (Rut 2:4 AWV)
וְאַתָּה שָׁלוֹם וּבֵיתְךָ שָׁלוֹם וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ שָׁלוֹם׃	As for you, (may you have) peace! And as for your household, (may they have) peace! And as for everything you have, (may it have) peace! (1Sa 25:6 AWV)
שְׁלָמָא כְלָא	(May you have) all peace! (Ezr 5:7 [tmr] AWV)

The most common [hbo] expression corresponding to "to greet" is שאל ל לשלום, 'to ask after someone's peace', and questions do in fact appear in this function:

הֲשָׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם ... הַעוֹדֶנּוּ חָי	Is there peace of your father? … Is he still alive?
—שָׁלוֹם לְעַבְדְּךָ לְאָבִינוּ עוֹדֶנּוּ חָי	—Your servant our father has peace—he is still alive. (Gen 43:27-28 AWV)

[hbo] greetings may be accompanied by gestures such as prostrating oneself, embracing and weeping, and—especially when greeting a superior or aggrieved party—gift-giving.

Optative utterances and blessings may function in [hbo] not only for greetings, but also for leave-taking[8] and thanking; the reader becomes accustomed to understanding the social/pragmatic function from the context:

[7]Though this is undoubtedly the origin of the expression, the reduced form is standardly felt by native speakers to be an interjection (as can be shown by the echoing, rather than thanking, response), just as is the reduced [biv] question *Jãanvɔr?* (which may receive an echoing or answering response).

[8]As, of course, also in [eng] "Farewell!" and "Goodbye!" (derived from "God be with you!").

לְכִי לְשָׁלוֹם	Go in peace,
וֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן אֶת־שֵׁלָתֵךְ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתְּ מֵעִמּוֹ׃	and as for the God of Israel, may he grant your request! (1Sa 1:17 AWV)
בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ לַיהוָה בִּתִּי	I hereby bless you by YHWH, my daughter![9] (Rut 3:10 AWV)

In [ls-wa] on the other hand, optatives and blessings tend to occur most frequently, not in greetings, but in leave-taking and thanking (indeed the Semitic root √ברך itself has passed through [arb] and [hau] into [dga] and [wlx] as *Barka*!, 'Thank you!'):

Nãaŋmen nɪ bɪɛl fʊ naa!—Too!	May God accompany you!—OK!	[biv]
Hwo pɔl tyang!—Ano! Ma feng!	May you spend the night well!—So be it! I thank!	[bom]
Dagwi a tɛ̀ a hwo nerat!	May God put to you a blessing! (i.e., Thank you!)	[bom]

As a result, optative greetings in Bible translations are prone to misunderstanding. Rut 2:4 [biv] draft (cf., [hbo] above) reads:

Bowasɪ ... puor a ŋmaŋmarba ka,	Boaz greeted the reapers,	
"A Yaawee wʊ be a yɪ sɛ̃!"	"May Yahweh be with you!"	
—"A Yaawee wʊ mɪ bɪɛl fʊ."	—"May Yahweh accompany you too!"	(Rut 2:4 [biv] draft)

"Greeting" has been made explicit here, but ironically this hinders as much as it helps, since [biv] *puor* is the standard term for 'greet', 'say goodbye' and 'thank' (and also 'pray', 'be a Christian' and 'mention someone's name'); to a Birifor reader, Boaz may seem to be taking his leave from his reapers, or thanking them for working so hard! Similarly, 1Sa 25:6 (cf., [hbo] above) reads in three versions:

Salama gare ka, salama ga gidanka,	Greetings to you, greetings to your household,
salama kuma ga dukan abin da kake da shi.	greetings also to everything that you have! (1Sa 25:6 [hau]:LMT79)
Ina maka fatan alheri,	I am wishing you goodness,
kai da gidanka da dukan abin da kake da shi!	and your household and everything that you have! (1Sa 25:6 [hau]:HCL draft)
Tik na Dagwi a tɛ̀ netyang e ra hwo na belɔ mǒ	May God put goodness on you and your household
vɔk e shey de he kyè vey, na a tɛ̀ yas mǒ ye mare!	until the coming year, and may he cause your animals to yield! (1Sa 25:6 [bom] draft)

[hau]:LMT79 *salama* is the cognate of [arb] √سلم, *slm*, and so is effective in the Islamic-influenced communities that it serves. By contrast, the new [hau]:HCL, which is aimed at second-language speakers of [hau] (who are more influenced by their predominantly Niger-Congo mother-tongues and may not be Muslims), has chosen to rephrase with reference to a speech act. Finally, the Berom expression is not used in natural language as a greeting, but more likely as a dismissive way of avoiding a request for money!

2.2 Modal Particles

It is well known that [hbo] does not have a term corresponding exactly to [eng] 'please!'. In fact, many [ls-wa] also lack a single term, and have phrases instead:

Mepa wo kyɛw!	I take off my hat to you!	[aka]
Sʋɔrfʊ lɛ!	It's a begging!	[biv]
Don Allah!	For God's sake!	[hau]

[9] Interpretation of the nominal clause as an explicit speech act here, in Psa 2:7 and elsewhere is argued for in Warren (2002c).

[hbo] does have a range of strategies for fulfilling this function, including the particles בִּי, לוּ, נָא,[10] the *paragogic he* of the cohortative and adhortative forms,[11] structures such as *figura etymologica*[12] and hendiadys, and the common expression "May I find favor in your sight:"

בִּי אֲדֹנִי	Please, my master …	(1Sa 1:26 AWV)
לוּ יִשְׁמָעֵאל יִחְיֶה לְפָנֶיךָ	O that Ishmael might live in your sight!	(Gen 17:18 NRSV)
קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ֙ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ֙	Take your only son	(Gen 22:2 AWV)
אֲלַקֳּטָה־נָּא֙ וְאָסַפְתִּי בָעֳמָרִ֔ים	Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves	(Rut 2:7 NRSV)
לְעֶזְרָתִי חוּשָׁה	come quickly and help me!	(Psa 70:2 NJB)
אִם־רָאֹה תִּרְאֶה בָּעֳנִי אֲמָתֶךָ וּזְכַרְתַּנִי֙ וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּ֣ח אֶת־אֲמָתֶ֔ךָ	If you should deign to look at your slave-girl's wretchedness, and if you should think of me, not forgetting your slave-girl …	(1Sa 1:11 AWV)
וְיִמְצְאוּ הַנְּעָרִים חֵן֙ בְּעֵינֶיךָ	May the young men find favor in your eyes	(1Sa 25:8 AWV)

However, נא and *paragogic he* should not be understood as bearing precative force in themselves. The precative/directive distinction is a function of the speaker-addressee relationship, and these morphemes may serve to strengthen the modal force of both precative (junior to senior, Rut 2:7) and directive (senior to junior, Gen 22:2) utterances.

2.3 Participant Reference

Most greetings in [ls-wa] and [hbo] can be used irrespective of status relations (including most of the [ls-wa] question-greetings); however, there are some interjections, optatives and even questions which are restricted to absolute status positions (of rulers and household heads), and so carry in themselves a kind of senior-participant reference:

<voiced glottal plosive>	(Greeting a chief)	[lns]
A fʊ yir?—Ba kpɛmɛ naa!	(How is) your household?—They are strong!	[biv]

When we, in [hbo], find such a restricted term used in an unexpected context, we should perhaps consider whether the honorific is still implicit:

יְחִי לְבַבְכֶם לָעַד	May your hearts live for ever!	(Psa 22:27 AWV)

This optative greeting is normally restricted to address of a king, but it is here used in the context of God's provision for the poor. We should therefore understand this text as implicitly raising the poor to royal status, as is done more explicitly in other "reversal-of-fortunes" texts such as 1Sa 2:1–10 (esp. v. 8 // Psa 113:7–8; Luk 1:52; Mat 5:3–12).

In most cases, the greeting will be accompanied by explicit participant reference, which may precede the greeting, be integrated with it, or follow it:

Nɪkpɛ̃ɛ, fʊ gã jie?	Big person, (how is) your lying down place?	[biv]
יְחִי אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לְעֹלָם	May my lord King David live forever!	(1Ki 1:31 NRSV)
Show a da!	Hello, father!	[bom]
Ranka yă daḍe, sarki!	Live for ever, Chief!	[hau]

In the following, we consider first the grammatical forms used in polite participant reference, and then the two sets of status terms which may be used.

[10] See Wilt (1996) and response in Warren (2002a).
[11] See de Regt (2003).
[12] Compare [biv] *bɔ̃ɔ*, 'know', which can modify any verb phrase as 'do well to', 'do it carefully', 'please deign to do'.

2.3.1 Grammatical Forms

Polite reference to 1st, 2nd or 3rd person may be achieved by means of metonyms—substitute terms referring to concepts associated closely with the participant (especially body parts, or "psychophysical substitutes"—body parts standing for emotions (Lauha 1983)):

A sɪ chen tɪ puor a naa sɛ̃ɛ.	Let's go and greet *the Chief's place*.	[biv]
יָדַעְתָּ בְּצָרוֹת נַפְשִׁי׃	You know about the narrow straits of *my soul*. (Psa 31:8 AWV)	
וַאֲכַבְּדָה שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם׃	and I will bless *your name* for ever. (Psa 86:12 AWV)	
הַלְלוּ יָהּ׀ הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי יְהוָה֮ הַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה׃	Praise YHWH! Praise, YHWH's slaves—praise *YHWH's name*! (Psa 113:1 AWV)	
לְךָ֤ אָמַר֙ לִבִּי בַּקְּשׁוּ פָנָ֣י אֶת־פָּנֶ֔יךָ יְהוָ֖ה אֲבַקֵּֽשׁ׃	'Come on,' my heart says, 'seek audience with his [corr.] face!' / With *your face*, YHWH, I seek audience. (Psa 27:8 AWV)	

Here, we are concerned primarily with status terms, which, in [hbo], may also occur in all three grammatical persons (cf., [eng] 'his highness', 'your highness'). They usually occur together with direct 2nd and 1st person reference (one of the characteristic features of the rhetorical artistry of the Psalms):

יָקֻם אָבִי֙ וְיֹאכַל֙ מִצֵּ֣יד בְּנ֔וֹ בַּעֲב֕וּר תְּבָרֲכַ֖נִי נַפְשֶֽׁךָ׃	Let my [1] father [3] sit up and eat of his [3] son's [3] game, so that you [2] may bless me [1]. (Gen 27:31 NRSV)	
אִם־רָאֹ֤ה תִרְאֶה֙ בָּעֳנִ֣י אֲמָתֶ֔ךָ	if you should deign to look at your slave-girl's wretchedness,	
וּזְכַרְתַּ֥נִי֙ וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּ֣ח אֶת־אֲמָתֶ֔ךָ	and if you should think of me, not forgetting your slave-girl,	
וְנָתַתָּ֥ה לַאֲמָתְךָ֖ זֶ֣רַע אֲנָשִׁ֑ים	and you enable your slave-girl to give birth,	
וּנְתַתִּ֥יו לַיהוָ֖ה כָּל־יְמֵ֣י חַיָּ֑יו	then I'll give him to YHWH for his whole life … (1Sa 1:11 AWV)	
אֲדֹנִי֙ הַמֶּ֣לֶךְ עַבְדִּ֔י רִמָּ֖נִי כִּי־אָמַ֣ר עַבְדְּךָ֑	'My lord king [Voc], … my retainer deceived me [1]. Your [2] servant [3] said to him,	
אֶחְבְּשָׁה־לִּי֙ הַחֲמ֣וֹר וְאֶרְכַּ֔ב עָלָ֖יו וְאֵלֵ֣ךְ אֶת־הַמֶּ֑לֶךְ	"Saddle the donkey for me to ride, so that I can go with the king,"	
כִּ֥י פִסֵּ֖חַ עַבְדֶּֽךָ׃	your [2] servant [3] being lame.	
וַיְרַגֵּ֥ל בְּעַבְדְּךָ֖ אֶל־אֲדֹנִ֣י הַמֶּ֑לֶךְ	He has slandered your [2] servant [3] to my [1] lord the king [3].	
וַאדֹנִ֣י הַמֶּ֔לֶךְ כְּמַלְאַ֖ךְ הָאֱלֹהִ֑ים	My [1] lord the king [3], however, is like the Angel of God,	
וַעֲשֵׂ֖ה הַטּ֥וֹב בְּעֵינֶֽיךָ׃	so do as you [2] think right.	
כִּי֙ לֹא֙ הָיָ֣ה כָל־בֵּ֔ית אָבִ֖י כִּ֣י אִם־אַנְשֵׁי־מָ֑וֶת	My father's entire family deserved no better than death from my [1] lord the king [3],	
לַאדֹנִ֣י הַמֶּ֔לֶךְ וַתָּ֣שֶׂם אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ֔ בְּאֹכְלֵ֖י שֻׁלְחָנֶ֑ךָ	and yet you [2] admitted your [2] servant [3] to the ranks of those who eat at your table.	
וּמַה־יֶּשׁ־לִ֥י עוֹד֙ צְדָקָ֔ה וְלִזְעֹ֖ק עוֹד֙ אֶל־הַמֶּ֔לֶךְ׃	What right have I [1] to make any further appeal to the king [3]?' (2Sa 19:27–29 NJB)	

Possessed metonymous terms in *address* ('my master' etc.) also occur frequently in [ls-wa]; when such terms are *not* possessed in [hbo] (e.g., 'master'), a possessive usually has to be added in the translation.[13] Metonymous terms in *self-reference* are, however, not normal in [ls-wa]. It may be possible to say *na hwo di me, sam mō*, 'and you see me, your slave' (1Sa 1:11 [bom] draft), or to use a relative phrase such as 'I, who am your servant', but to do so three times sounds terribly unnatural (hence those translations which do use such a term tend to use it only once ([bom], [hau]:LMT79) or twice ([hau]:HCL). The [biv] form of Hannah's prayer therefore replaces the triple self-reference as אמתך, 'your slave-girl', with a much more natural triple *addressee*-reference as *n Soro*, 'my master':

Kamasɛl Yaawee,	Poisonous Yahweh	
fʊ̃ʊ bɔ̃ɔ kaa a maa dɔɔyɛ, n Soro,	if you look closely at my suffering, my Owner,	
fʊ̃ʊ tɪɛr a n yele sɪrɛ, n Soro,	if you think of my matter seriously, my Owner,	
fʊ̃ʊ kʊ ma bie, n Soro,	if you give me a child, my Owner,	
too ɪn de wʊn kʊ fʊ̃ʊ Yaawee	then I will take him give you Yahweh	
ka fʊ tara wʊ a wʊ vʊr pɔ wʊjaa,	so that you have him in his whole breathing,	
ka sɔbɪra kʊ̃ sɪr wʊ ju ɛ.	and shaving-knife will not touch his head.	(1Sa 1:11 [biv])

Politeness may involve special uses of grammatical person quite apart from metonymy. Honorific use of plural forms is known in Romance, Germanic, Altaic and other Indo-European languages (e.g., [eng] 1st person royal *we*, [fra] 2nd person plural *vous* for singular, [deu] 3rd person plural *Sie* for 2nd person singular or plural[14]), and also occurs in [ls-wa]:[15]

Yɪ kpɛmɛ naa?—N kpɛmɛ naa!	Are you (pl.) strong?—I am strong!	[biv]

It may well be that this develops by extension from the role of the senior figure as head of a large household, and this is probably the case in European languages too. Honorific use of plural forms is not a characteristic feature of [hbo], and the plural terms אלהים, 'God', and אדני, 'Lord' are almost certainly not plurals of majesty, but of *extension* (as מים, 'water', שמים, 'sky', פנים, 'face' etc.). It may however be present in:

נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ	Let us make humans, according to how we are.	(Gen 1:26 AWV)
הָבָה נֵרְדָה וְנָבְלָה שָׁם שְׂפָתָם	Come on, let's go down and confuse their speaking there.	(Gen 11:7 AWV)

A counterpoint to this plural address to a senior may be seen in God's *singular* address to the (junior) whole nation in Deuteronomy.

Finally, a range of features of passivisation and causation function in politeness. The *passivum divinum* is frequently employed to avoid referring to God explicitly as the agent of negative actions:

זְרוֹעוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּשָּׁבֵרְנָה	the arms of the wicked shall be broken	(Psa 37:17 NRSV)

Analogous to this is what I term the *causativum divinum*, that is, the use of request-cohortatives and request-jussives to "hide" the divine primary agent:[16]

אַל־אֶטְבָּעָה אִנָּצְלָה מִשֹּׂנְאָי	May I not sink! May I be saved from those who hate me!	(Psa 69:15 AWV)
תְּהִי־טִירָתָם נְשַׁמָּה בְּאָהֳלֵיהֶם אַל־יִהְיֶה יוֹשֵׁב׃	May their camp be a desolation; let no one live in their tents.	(Psa 69:25 AWV)

[13] The most frequent case of this is when the proper name יהוה is being read for translation purposes as the title אדני and so has to be rendered '*my* Lord' or similar.

[14] Navajo is even said to have a special "4th-person" form, which allows address of someone present without intruding on his power by naming him.

[15] In [bwr], deferential use of the 2nd-person plural for a singular addressee is particularly characteristic of a woman's address of her husband.

[16] The use of "let" in [eng] translations in such cases is a frequent cause of confusion to translators, since this appears to be a directive (imperative: "allow"), while it is in fact an optative marker.

The closest corollary to such grammatical features in [ls-wa] is the frequent use of "middle" verb forms, which avoid reference to an agent.

A fʊ bɔn sɔ̃ɔ naa.	Your thing has become spoilt.	[biv] / [eng-wa]
A ŋmɛr'aa.	It has broken.	[biv] / [eng-wa]

2.3.2 Status Terms

Absolute status, that is, real confirmed social or kinship status, is usually acknowledged by using the appropriate title:

Pastor, …		[eng-wa/us]
Chief, you …		[eng-wa]
אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ	My master the king	(2Sa 19:27 AWV)
וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו	Isaac spoke to his father Abraham.	
וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֶּנִּי בְנִי	'Father?' he said. 'Yes, my son,' he replied	(Gen 22:7 NJB)

(included in this category is the use of 'father', for example, for an uncle or more distant relation—this is not to be taken as a metaphor as in the below examples). *Relative status* may be expressed by means of very general terms.

Mr Andy, … sir		[eng-wa]
Shòw a gbɔng-mwat!	Hello, big person![17]	[bom]

However, it is typically expressed by metaphorical appropriation of service (master/slave) or kinship (father/son) terms.

Service terms in [hbo] include honorific address as:

> אדני, 'my master/lord' (Gen 23:6 Hittites to Abraham; Gen 31:35 Rachel to Laban; Gen 33 Jacob and Esau to each other; Jdg 6:13 Gideon to angel; Rut 2:13 Ruth to Boaz; 1Sa 1:15, 26 Hannah to Eli; 1Sa 25:24-31 Abigail to David; 1Ki 1:17 Bathsheba to David)
>
> or אדני, 'Master/Lord' (Gen 18:3 Abraham to three men; Gen 19:2 Lot to two men; Jdg 6:15 Gideon to angel)

and corresponding deprecating self-reference as

> אמתך, שׁפחתך / עבדך, 'Your slave / slave-girl' (1Sa 17:32 David to Saul / Rut 2:13 Ruth to Boaz; 1Sa 1:11 Hannah to God, 16, 18 Hannah to Eli; 1Sa 25:24–31 Abigail to David)[18]

These terms are used especially with strangers and those of much higher rank, and with God. That they are truly metaphors, not perceived as literally valid, is shown by Ruth:

אֶמְצָא־חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנִי	May I find favour in your eyes, my master,
כִּי נִחַמְתָּנִי וְכִי דִבַּרְתָּ עַל־לֵב שִׁפְחָתֶךָ	because you have consoled me and encouraged your slave-girl
וְאָנֹכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה כְּאַחַת שִׁפְחֹתֶיךָ׃	even though I couldn't become like one of your slave-girls. (Rut 2:13 AWV)

Though the term 'master' is still used in [eng-wa] in addressing taxi-drivers, and some [ls-wa] still use an equivalent ownership term which has not been replaced by the otherwise ubiquitous 'big man', the eradication of slavery in most parts of West Africa means that many languages no longer have a term for 'slave'. The term has become tabooed or even genuinely forgotten, though it may now be perpetuated, as is the case with [bom] *sam*, by church use. The HCL team have struggled over whether they can use the

[17] Many [ls-wa] have a term 'big man', which may also function contextually to mean 'adult', 'sir', 'master/boss', 'sponsor' and even 'policeman'.

[18] This self-referential use of עבד in fact accounts for around one-sixth of its Old Testament occurrences.

archaic term *bawa* for 'slave', while they use the relative clause *mai yi hidima* 'who does service' for 'servant' (distinguishing the two as NRSV). Some languages have to simply content themselves with using a term for 'worker' or the like (which then may also appear in key terms such as 'apostle', 'deacon' and 'prophet').

Kinship terms in [hbo] and [ls-wa] include address as:

> אבי, 'my father' (1Sa 24:12 David to Saul; 2Ki 2:12 Elisha to Elijah; 2Ki 5:13 servants to Naaman; 2Ki 13:14 Joash to Elisha)
>
> בני / בתי, 'my son / my daughter' (Jos 7:19 Joshua to Achan; 1Sa 3:6 Eli to Samuel; 4:16 Eli to a messenger; 24:17 Saul to David; 2Ch 29:11 Hezekiah to Levites / Rut 2:8 Boaz to Ruth; Rut 3:1 Naomi to Ruth)[19]
>
> אחי / אחותי, 'my brother / my sister' (2Sa 1:26 David of Jonathan; 1Ki 9:13 Hiram to Solomon; Ki 13:30 a prophet of the man of God from Judah / Sng *passim*)

and corresponding self-reference as

> בנך, 'your son' (2Ki 8:9 Ben-Hadad to Elisha)

These are used with acquaintances. [ls-wa] use all of these (and [eng-wa] adds 'uncle/auntie'), speakers usually only marking gender when it is not their own.

At several points, the West African situation is different from that of [hbo]:

In [hbo], a junior usually uses a service metaphor ('my master' / 'your servant'), expressing respect; a senior usually uses a kinship metaphor ('my son'), expressing love; we see this between Ruth and Boaz, and between David and Saul. In [ls-wa], service metaphors tend only to be used in the absence of any kind of kinship affiliation, or in the case of a large status gap, unmitigated by social ties; otherwise, kinship terms are used.

A junior may alternate between service and kinship metaphors; we see this in David speaking to Saul, and David speaking to Nabal. Servants may use a kinship metaphor (2Ki 5:13), as may a king in addressing a prophet (2Ki 8:9), and a daughter may use a service metaphor (Gen 31:35). Such free alternation does not occur in [ls-wa], where there is a general aspiration towards (at least the semblance of) kinship, and where 'father' is no less respectful than 'master' (in fact, it may be more so)—once sufficient closeness has been achieved for use of kinship terms, one will not normally revert back to service terms. Hence Gen 31:35 may prove a difficult text to translate.

In marriage, a husband may use his wife's name (1Sa 1:8), and she may call him her 'master' (Gen 18:12; 1Ki 1:17; the usual term is אישי, 'my man'). Both of these go against the common [ls-wa] pattern of:

young people before marriage:	personal names
married without children:	'father of the house' / 'woman of the house' or 'my husband' / 'my woman'
married with children:	'<eldest/youngest child's name>'s father / mother'

Elkanah's use of Hannah's name in 1Sa 1:8 may thus suggest, if rendered in [ls-wa], that Elkanah is either effectively divorcing Hannah by demoting her to pre-marital status, or, on the contrary, speaking with her in a very intimate way in private.

2.4 Redundant Reference to the Speech Act

Most of us at some time or other have started a letter, "I am writing to you to …". This is what I am calling here "redundant reference to the speech act." It is not, it should be noted, an actual explicit speech act, since

[19] A New Testament text, Luk 8:48, presents a surprise here, since Jesus in his early thirties cannot have been much older than this woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (in fact, perhaps she was older than him), and yet he addresses her as 'daughter'.

that would require the perfective form ([eng] present simple: "I hereby inform you …"; [hbo] *qāṭal*).[20] Both forms can be seen side-by-side in conversational exchanges with people who are a bit deaf:

N puor fʊ naa!—Ka ŋmɪnɛ?—N puoro fʊ naa!	I (hereby) greet you!—What?—I'm greeting you!	[biv]

Though this practice is not "honorific" or "self-deprecating" participant reference, it does perform the function of shifting the focus of the utterance away from the request, or, put differently, it "demotes" the request into a subordinate clause where it can be less threatening to the addressee's face:

N wa naa ɪka n wa sʊɔr a fʊ ˈlaar.	I have come so that I come ask for your axe.	[biv]
N sʊɔrɔ naa sɔr ɪka fʊ vɛ̃ ka n yi.	I am begging permission so that you should allow that I go.	[biv]

A similar tendency can be seen in some more stiff types of English 'Christianese':[21]

Lord, we pray that you would/might …	[eng (religious)]

2.5 Addressing God in the Psalms

If the above characterization of [hbo] politeness forms, and of their equivalents in [ls-wa] and other languages is correct, many questions arise for the translation of language addressed to the ultimate "senior" figure—God himself—in the Psalms and other biblical prayers.[22]

Greetings. Though many might find the title of Benny Hinn's popular Christian paperback *Good Morning, Holy Spirit* a little odd, I know several quite conservative European Christians who admit to praying "Good morning, Lord" when they wake up. It seems that they sense a need to conform to their European politeness traditions even in relationship to God himself! This does raise an interesting question, however. If [hbo] culture does lay significant stress on greeting (more than European culture, but less than West African culture), and if [hbo] greetings are prototypically optatives and blessings, what are we to make of the four ברוך-phrases which divide the Psalter into five books, and what of the many Psalm introits in הללו, 'Praise!', הודו, 'Acknowledge!', שׁירו, 'Sing!', and ברכי, 'Bless!'? Is the Psalmist in fact 'greeting' God? And if so, in any form at all, should this not be reflected in translations intended for a culture as "greeting-oriented" as West Africa?

Modal Particles. If the above analysis is correct, the very high occurrence of most of these modal forms in the Psalter[23] should lead us to expect to find the interjection "please" used frequently in English translations. In fact, we find that, among the better-known modern versions, only CEV uses 'please', and that only eight times! Even if, as in some [ls-wa], the only equivalents available are rather "heavy" expressions, should we not find ways to incorporate the tone of entreaty, lest the desperate cries of the Psalmist, like those of a blind beggar screaming to Jesus to help him, get sanitised into the lilting cadences of a *'Kyrie eleison'*?

Participant Reference. The address of God in the Psalms has most often been considered in terms of its religious context, that is, that the need was felt to actually name YHWH in order to indicate that this was an Israelite, Yahwistic psalm, not a Canaanite one. This, of course, is clearly the case in those Psalms which may have been directly plagiarized from Canaanite originals, putting the name of God in the place of that of Baal, or El etc. Many Psalms scholars would also refer to the idea of "invoking" the deity, as one might a prophetic spirit. However, the sociolinguistic dimension of deferential address discussed here also deserves consideration. This is certainly how these Psalms sound in a West African context—the address (in the first colon of around a third of the Psalms) establishing phatic communion before requests are issued, just like the first three "hedging" elements in the popular pattern for Christian prayer, ACTS: 'Adoration—Confession—Thanksgiving—Supplication' (or, more bluntly, 'respect—sorry—thank you—

[20] Aspectual perfectivity is one of the conditions for performativity listed by Austin (1976).
[21] Bald imperatives are extremely rare in prayers in [eng-uk].
[22] For more on idiomatic language in Psalms, see Warren-Rothlin (2005).
[23] See, for example, Tsevat (1955), or Dahood and Penar (1970).

please'). Seen in this way, address of God itself should be seen, in Gunkel's form-critical terms, as a "motivation for divine intervention."

Redundant Reference to the Speech Act. Psalms frequently open with lines such as:

אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא׃ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
אֱלֹהַי בְּךָ בָטַחְתִּי אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה אַל־יַעַלְצוּ אֹיְבַי לִי׃ O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.
(Psa 25:2 NRSV)

Here, two vocatives, reference to a speech act (not an explicit performative, which would take *qāṭal*) and a reference to the psalmist's own preceding action all come before the mand. My proposal is that, like greetings, modal particles and the various forms of participant reference discussed above, these function to offset focus from the mand, thus mitigating its force.

3. Indirection Strategies

Politeness strategies may be based on various kinds of indirection. A wide range of figures of speech may be employed, but here, we briefly consider referential indirectness in the form of euphemisms, and then inflectional indirectness in the form of Indirect Speech Acts, especially rhetorical questions.

Euphemisms usually use various kinds of metonymy to facilitate communication, especially about death, sex and bodily functions:

Wʊ dʊ naa man. He has crossed the river. [biv]
Sɪ ben taa. We met each other. [biv]
דֶּרֶךְ נָשִׁים לִי I'm going through that women's thing. (Gen 31:35 AWV)

They may involve word-substitution:

A sɛɛ fʊ nyu kʊ̃ɔ! You need a wash! (lit. 'You need a drink!') [biv]
Maa tara wʊɔ ɛ! I haven't got money! (lit. 'I haven't got a bag!') [biv]
כִּי אִם־אִשָּׁה עֲצָרָה־לָּנוּ ... כְּלֵי־הַנְּעָרִים קֹדֶשׁ Women have been kept from us … The men's 'tools' are holy. (1Sa 21:6 AWV)

The term substituted may even be the opposite of that meant:

בֵּרַךְ נָבוֹת אֱלֹהִים וָמֶלֶךְ Naboth 'blessed' [i.e., cursed] God and the king. (1Ki 21:13 NRSV)
Nãŋmɪn nɪ bɪɛl fʊ naa! May God 'bless' [i.e., curse] you! [biv]

This relates to the figure of speech known as litotes, which expresses a thing by negating its opposite.

pyɛ de Shɛkɛm a ra, ya sé byɛs tyɔng wɛt What Shechem did is no small offence (Gen 34:7 [bom] draft)
לֹא־עָזַב חַסְדּוֹ אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַמֵּתִים He has not failed to show his allegiance to the living and the dead. (Rut 2:20 AWV)

Indirect Speech Acts represent a kind of "inflectional" indirectness, or clause-level euphemism—they replace potentially offensive or face-threatening mands, negations and questions with "harmless" statements and rhetorical questions. The range of forms which may be used for one function is amusingly illustrated for [eng] by Levinson (1983:264–65):

I'd be much obliged if you'd close the door.
You ought to close the door.
It might help to close the door.
I am sorry to have to tell you to please close the door.
Can you close the door?
Would you mind closing the door?
May I ask you to close the door?
Did you forget the door?

Now Johnny, what do big people do when they come in?
Okay, Johnny, what am I going to say next?

The most common form of Indirect Speech Act in [hbo] and [ls-wa] is the rhetorical question.[24] In fact, around seventy percent of the questions in the Bible are rhetorical, not real. We find these in [hbo] in bargaining scenes, such as that between Abraham and the Hittites over the cave of Machpelah (Gen 23), and the confrontation between Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:22-54). However, it is in the Psalms that we find rhetorical questions fulfilling the widest range of functions, and they can be helpfully rephrased to aid translators (here, only a small sample of mands is listed):

Do!		
85:7	Will you not revive us again?	Revive us again!
4:7	Who will show us good?	Show us good!
94:8	When will you be wise?	Be wise!
89:50	Where is your steadfast love?	Show me your steadfast love!
Don't!		
77:8	Must the Lord reject for ever?	Don't reject for ever!
77:10	Has God forgotten what being gracious is?	Don't forget to be gracious!
60:12	Have you not rejected us, God?	Don't reject us!
74:10	How long, God, is the enemy to scoff?	Don't allow the enemy to scoff any longer!
80:5	How long will you be angry?	Don't be angry any longer!
11:1	How can you say?	Don't say!
44:25	Why must you hide your face?	Don't hide your face!
42:10	Why have you forgotten me?	Don't forget me!

Rhetorical questions are very common in [ls-wa], both for deferential indirectness and outright reproach ("Why?" questions in particular almost always contain a note of reproach). There is one clear mismatch, however, between [hbo] and [ls-wa] usage. [hbo] rhetorical questions are overwhelmingly in the form of content questions (around seventy percent), while rhetorical questions in [ls-wa] tend to be polar questions. It may therefore be necessary to consider rephrasing rhetorical questions not as mands, but as polar questions (that is, prefacing the 'Do!' statements above with 'Will you not …?', and the 'Don't!' statements with 'Will/Must you …?'.

4. Politeness Functions of Verbal Forms

A special feature of [hbo] is the wide range of verbal functions achieved by just two main verbal forms—*qāṭal* prototypically for indicative past and *yiqṭōl* prototypically for subjunctive (epistemic and deontic modality).[25] Several of their functions are pragmatically defined.

4.1 *Qāṭal* as 'Precative Perfect': Deontic 'If only …!'

J.R. Taylor (1989:149–54) applies insights from cognitive linguistic theory to the description of the [eng] past tense. He describes "three groups of meanings associated with the past tense" (a range exhibited also by equivalent forms in Italian and Zulu):

- deictic past time, extended also to narrative past tense, and 'narrativity *tout court*' (as in fictional, and even future-based science-fiction narratives)
- counterfactuality in conditionals ('If I had enough time, …'), optatives ('I wish I knew the answer') and suggestions ('Suppose we went to see him')—Taylor explains this as a conventionalized implicature; the more usual explanation has to do with distance in time being taken as a metaphor for distance in reality.

[24] For fuller discussions, see Beekman and Callow (1974), de Regt (2003) and de Regt 1994.
[25] For further details of this view, see Warren (1998a), Warren (2002a) and Warren (2002b).

- a "pragmatic softener" or marker of "tact" ('Excuse me, I wanted to ask you something'), a use which "has been conventionalized in the meanings of the past tense modals" ('Could you help me?')—Taylor explains this as a double metaphorisation, time being construed in terms of space, and then space being taken as a metaphor for involvement. "Thus, by using the past tense, the speaker can as it were distance himself from the speech act that he is performing. Hence the greater tactfulness of the past tense sentences …"

Taylor goes on to argue, in terms of his prototypical-to-peripheral understanding of semantic domains, against "core meaning" descriptions of the past tense in terms of remoteness (since this should also include future and geographical remoteness).

This functioning of the [eng] past tense for counterfactual conditionals and optatives is shared by verbal forms and complementising particles in other [ls-eur]:

Conjunctive Functions	Main-Clause Optative	
If you had been here, … (Conditional)	If only you had been here!	[eng]
Wärst du da gewesen ... (Conditional)	Wärst du nur da gewesen!	[deu]
I knew ... that you would come. (Complementiser)	Oh that he would come!	[eng]
Je savais ... que tu viendrais. (Complementiser)	Qu'il vienne!	[fra]

From here, we can turn to the much-debated function of the [hbo] deictic past tense *qāṭal* (which is incidentally *not* also the default narrative form) in the optative construction 'emphatic *kī* + precative perfect'.

קוּמָה יְהוָה׀ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהָי	Get up, YHWH! Save me, my God!
כִּי־הִכִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבַי לֶחִי שִׁנֵּי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבַּרְתָּ׃	O that you would hit all my enemies in the face and break the teeth of the godless! (Psa 3:8 AWV)
בְּשׁוּב־אוֹיְבַי אָחוֹר יִכָּשְׁלוּ֥ וְיֹאבְד֗וּ מִפָּנֶ֫יךָ׃	When my enemies retreat, may they stumble and be destroyed before you.
כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטִי וְדִינִי	O that you would do me justice and vindication!
יָשַׁבְתָּ֥ לְכִסֵּא שׁוֹפֵט צֶ֫דֶק׃	That you would take your seat as a righteous judge!
גָּעַרְתָּ גּוֹיִם אִבַּדְתָּ רָשָׁע	That you would drive away pagans, destroy the godless!
שְׁמָם֮ מָחִ֪יתָ לְעוֹלָ֫ם וָעֶ֥ד׃	That you would wipe out their name for ever!
הָאוֹיֵב׀ תַּמּ֣וּ חֳרָב֣וֹת לָנֶ֣צַח וְעָרִ֔ים נָתַ֖שְׁתָּ	That enemies would be finished, in ruins for ever! That you would annihilate their cities!
אָבַ֣ד זִכְרָ֣ם הֵֽמָּה׃	That the memory of those people would perish! (Psa 9:4-7 AWV)

This "emphatic" *kī* has been widely disputed, but in the light of [eng] *that* and [fra] *que*, it seems that it need not be viewed as a separate category, but simply as a main-clause correspondent to the generally acknowledged conditional and complementising functions. And the "precative" function of *qāṭal* has an analogy in the above functions of [eng] and [deu] past forms. Thus the precative perfect is not, as has been suggested by some, a more "perfective" request form, but a politeness form, and this conclusion is confirmed by the co-occurrence with deontic *qāṭal* of the "weak" modal particles כי, לו, מי יתן, deontic אם־נא, כי־אם, and כמאט.

4.2 Long-Form *yiqṭōl* as Preceptive Imperfect: Deontic 'must'

In complementary relationship to the precative perfect within the [hbo] verbal system stands the "preceptive imperfect," that is, use of the long (non-jussive) form of *yiqṭōl* in legal (e.g., decalogue) and procedural (e.g., construction of Noah's ark, Gen 6) texts. This is a predictable function of a subjunctive form—deontic 'must' ('You must not steal') as the corollary to epistemic 'must' ('Why must your heart be

sad?' 1Sa 1:8). [26] The semantic range of [hbo] *yiqṭōl* is shared by [eng] *will* and [biv] *ni*; other [ls-wa] may have modal particles which are more than adequate to express this functional range.

It has sometimes been claimed that the use of long-form *yiqṭōl* rather than the jussive short form in texts such as the decalogue is to be taken as particularly emphatic and forceful, rather like a parent insisting in exasperation to her child, 'You *will* do as I say!', or a rather over-imperious judge insisting, 'You shall be required to pay the sum of …' or even 'You shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead!'. None of these is the sense of the decalogue, but rather a cool and objective "must," part of that "instruction" which we know as "Torah." In this sense, it truly is a "politeness form," since it is not loaded in the same way as is the jussive with speaker volition. It admits no argument, since it carries the force of law.

The preceptive imperfect is complementary to the precative perfect in both rhetorical and sociolinguistic terms. There is rhetorical complementarity in that the precative perfect is primarily volitional and secondarily directive, while the preceptive imperfect is primarily directive and only implicitly volitional. Sociolinguistic complementarity lies in the fact that the precative perfect is restricted to address of a senior (address of God in the Psalms), while the preceptive imperfect is restricted to address of a junior (divine address of man in legal and procedural discourse).

4.3 Long-Form *yiqṭōl* in Questions: Epistemic 'might'

Finally, the long-form *yiqṭōl* is used in [hbo], as in [heb], to form polite questions (much like the use of 'would' in English). This occurs particularly in address to a stranger.

> Gen 37:15 'what might you be looking for?' (// reply *qōṭēl*; man to young Joseph)
>
> Jos 9:8 'where might you be coming from?' (// reply *qāṭal*; Joshua to Gibeonites)
>
> Jdg 19:17 'where might you be going and where might you be coming from?' (// reply *qōṭēl*; old man to Levite from Ephraim)

Identical questions, when asked by a superior of an inferior, can take *qāṭal*:

> Gen 16:8 'where have you come from?' (// reply *qōṭēl*; YHWH's angel to Hagar)
>
> Gen 42:7 'where have you come from?' (// reply gapping; Governor Joseph to his brothers)

In this way, sociolinguistic distinctions can quickly clarify issues which have puzzled traditional grammarians.

5. Dynamic Equivalence in Translating Politeness

Here, we have just touched on a few of those features which make up a communicative culture, or a culturally-distinct pragmatics. As we may know from our own experiences, at this pragmatic level, minute formal details can carry a great deal of meaning.

We have found many points of similarity between [hbo] and [ls-wa] politeness forms. However, there are also subtle but significant mismatches. Optatives function in [hbo] for initial greetings, but in [ls-wa], only for leave-taking and thanking. Metonymy for the 1st person is possible in [hbo] but not in those [ls-wa] treated here. For rhetorical questions, [hbo] prefers content questions, while [ls-wa] prefer polar questions.

Most of the functions represented by these strategies are close to equivalent, one might say, "interchangeable." If it is legitimate to render 'me your slave' with 'O master!' (1Sa 1:11 [biv]), might it not be equally legitimate to render the [hbo] default term 'lord' according to context as 'old man', 'big man' or even 'father'? Can one achieve the distinctive pragmatic force of a precative perfect or *figura etymologica* with an expression meaning 'please'? And can one even render blessing-greetings as normal

[26] This point has been argued at length in Warren (2002b).

African-style question-greetings? At what point do the voices of ancient Israelites become too African to be historically accurate?[27]

Many translators, even those with a good understanding of Hebrew idiom, hesitate to depart far from the wording of their RSV or BHS. Perhaps the new cognitive approaches to translator-training in terms of "frames" (UBS) and "relevance theory" (SIL) will help. But there remains a need for Hebraists to describe the pragmatic functions of [hbo] linguistic forms more systematically and more emically (or, failing that, at least with relation to a wider range of non-western ways of classifying the world). We may then be better able to relate the pursuit of functional equivalence to the translation of pragmatic features of [hbo].

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[27] For more on this, and a sample idiomatic translation of 2Ki 7 into [eng-uk], see Warren-Rothlin (2006); see also de Regt's (2003) interaction with Alter's [eng] translation.

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Abbreviations

Language-name abbreviations are taken from the Ethnologue/ISO 639-3; language-group abbreviations are based on these; Bible-book-name abbreviations are those of UBS/Paratext.

[aka]	Twi	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Kwa, Nyo, Potou-Tano, Tano, Central, Akan (Asante Twi)
[arb]	Arabic	Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic, Standard Arabic (Qur'anic Arabic)
[biv]	Birifor	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, North, Gur, Central, Northern, Oti-Volta, Western, Northwest, Dagaari-Birifor, Birifor, Southern
[bom]	Berom	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Platoid, Plateau, Southern, Berom
[bwr]	Bura	Afro-Asiatic, Chadic, Biu-Mandara, A, A2, 1, Bura-Pabir
[deu]	German	Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, German, Middle German, East Middle German, Standard
[dga]	Dagaari	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, North, Gur, Central, Northern, Oti-Volta, Western, Northwest, Dagaari-Birifor, Dagaari, Southern
[eng]	English	Indo-European, Germanic, West, English
[eng-uk]	British English	
[eng-us]	American English	
[eng-wa]	West African English	
[fra]	French	Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Gallo-Romance, Gallo-Rhaetian, Oïl, French
[gsw]	Swiss German	Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, German, Upper German, Alemannic
[hau]	Hausa	Afro-Asiatic, Chadic, West, A, A1, Hausa
[hbo]	Bibl. Hebrew	Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Canaanite, Ancient Hebrew
[heb]	mod. Hebrew	Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Canaanite, Modern Hebrew
[lns]	Lamns□	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Ring, East
[ls-eur]	European languages	

[ls-wa]	West African languages	(those cited here)
[rus]	Russian	Indo-European, Slavic, East, Russian
[tmr]	Bibl. Aramaic	Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, Aramaic, Eastern, Central, Northeastern, Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic
[wlx]	Waali	Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, North, Gur, Central, Northern, Oti-Volta, Western, Northwest
AWV	Author's own translation	
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia	
CEV	Contemporary English Version	
HCL	Hausa Common Language translation	
LMT79	Littafi Mai Tsarki 1979 ([hau] translation)	
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	