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A History of Twentieth Century Translation Theory and Its Application for Bible Translation

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Abstract

This article studies the development of twentieth century translation theory. This was a period during which significant theoretical contributions were made in both secular and Bible translation circles. These contributions have had a profound impact on the practice of translation throughout the twentieth century and since. The individuals who contributed to the present state of translation theory worked in both secular and Bible translation circles and this article examines contributions from both. A select history of theoretical developments, focusing on the most important ideas relevant to Bible translation work is given in order to examine the impact of such theories in the practice of Bible translation. These include the philosophical approaches of the early twentieth century; the linguistic era of the 1950s and 1960s; the rise of functionalism and descriptive translation studies; and, finally, the emergence of postcolonial and related foreignising approaches.

1. Introduction

This article examines the history of twentieth century translation theory and its applicability to Bible translation. It is important to highlight this analysis as (1) an essential history (it is selective, not exhaustive) and (2) a history of translation theory (rather than practice). Any investigation of the history of translation is necessarily selective because of the expansive and sporadic nature of its development. The intention is to focus upon the most important contributions to theoretical discussions relevant to Bible translation theory.

The following major developments are discussed: Philosophical theories of translation, notably Ezra Pound and Walter Benjamin; the emergence of the linguistic era, of whom Eugene Nida was the most prominent thinker; the arrival of functionalism, the so-called "Cultural Turn" and Descriptive Translation Studies; and, finally, the input of postcolonial thinkers and related writers such as Lawrence Venuti. All of these movements contributed to the rise of Translation Studies as an independent discipline. The view taken in this article is that functionalism brings the most important contributions to Bible translation theory, in providing a practical basis for the multiplicity of potential readers.

2. Philosophical Theories of Translation

The twentieth century would see remarkable evolution in the development of translation theory, most of which occurred in the period after 1950, but a number of important contributions were made in the first half of the century. These can be broadly described as "philosophical theories of translation" with Ezra Pound and Walter Benjamin representing the most important thinkers in what George Steiner dubs the age of "philosophic-poetic theory and definition" (1998:249). They had particular influence upon later post-modern and deconstructionist translators and, from the perspective of this thesis, their views were clearly influential upon subsequent theorists such as Lawrence Venuti.

2.1. Ezra Pound

Always experimental, the influential poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972) varied between domesticating and archaizing strategies, but a consistent theme throughout was his insistence that translation seeks first to absorb and transform the ideas of the source text (ST) rather than to reproduce a set of words.

As is typical of archaizing strategies, the English target text (TT) is not necessarily readable, but that was not the goal. The experimental nature of Pound, his willingness to change focus, and his challenge for translators to view their work as creative forces, can provide interesting insights for contemporary Bible translators, where varied target cultures provide the kind of suitable "canvas" upon which their work may be considered in new creative ways.

2.2. Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a German literary critic, sociologist and philosopher who penned a highly influential essay on translation in 1923 titled *Die Aufgabe des Ubersetzers* (The Task of the Translator). It was originally produced as an introduction to a collection of translated poems (Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*) and is clearly indebted to German Romantic scholars such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Pivotal to Benjamin's view is the argument that translation should not serve to reproduce the *meaning* of the source text. Rather, translation served to continue the *life* of the original by operating in conjunction with it. Benjamin saw translations as giving an "afterlife" to the ST and did not therefore replace but extend the original (2000[1923]:15).

In this sense, there are some similarities with cases in Bible translation where examples exist of target texts exhibiting a kind of afterlife. Bible translations are sometimes revered as definitive, even when aspects of the translation may be questioned. This is well documented in the contemporary discussions over the so-called "KJV-only" debate, where supporters believe the 1611 KJV is the definitive, unquestionable rendering of Scripture. In such cases, the translation (in English) seems to become an extension of the original (Greek and Hebrew).

For Benjamin, a good translation was one that allowed the voice of the original to shine through, achieved not by attempting to emulate the original but by "harmonizing" with the message of the ST, and this was best achieved through literalism. "Real translation is transparent, it does not hide the original, it does not steal its light, but allows the pure language, as if reinforced through its own medium, to fall on the original work with greater fullness. This lies above all in the power of literalness in the translation of syntax, and even this points to the word, not the sentence, as the translator's original element" (Benjamin, in Lefevere 1977:102).

Notably, he saw interlinear Bible translations as the ideal to which he aimed: "Die Interlinearversion des heiligen Textes ist das Urbild oder Ideal aller Übersetzung" (The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the archetype or ideal of all translation) (Benjamin 1963[1923]:195).

Unfortunately, Benjamin did not expand upon the above but it does echo the thoughts of Pound who advocated "interpretive" texts, whereby a translation is printed next to the ST and features textual peculiarities designed to be understood against the foreign linguistic features of the original. Benjamin also suggested that, in crafting a target text, the translator partakes in the creation of a "pure language" (2000[1923]:18), one where the very highest form is an interlinear gloss but which typically avoids the natural vernacular of target language readers, using instead a harmonization, or bridge, between the source and target languages. It has been said that this somewhat philosophical ideal has, "commended itself more to theoretical specialists than to practitioners and their clients, since the practical need for this kind of translation tends to be limited" (Windle and Pym 2011:13). Indeed, such a pure language would presumably exist only once in the particular translation in which it is found, and cannot be reused or recycled for other purposes, because its existence depends upon its very status as a harmonization between source and target text. The practical uses of all such pure languages are limited beyond their existence in their translated texts themselves.

Like Pound, the approach of Walter Benjamin has some affiliation with Schleiermacher, Goethe and Humboldt, insofar as he adopts a translation strategy that in some way either emphasizes or makes obvious the foreign origins of the source text, but he does so in a more philosophical manner. To him, foreignising or archaizing translations are not simply helpful in depicting the original context and environment to the reader but are, in some way, better or purer and reflect a "higher way" of translation.

2.3. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig

Beyond the philosophical theories of Pound and Benjamin, other thinkers emerged during the first half of the twentieth century, notably Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), who collaborated on a German Bible translation in the 1920s, published in parts from 1933 to 1939, though never finished. Although sometimes thought to represent "a landmark in Bible translation" (Weissbort and Eysteinsson 2006:310), their views appear to have had little subsequent practical impact upon Bible translators, even among German translators.

Their concern was to draw readers closer to the ST world through innovative use of language; a kind of Hebraizing of the German TT. Everett Fox has summarized Buber and Rosenzweig's translation principles, saying that "translations of individual words should reflect "primal" root meanings,…translations of phrases, lines, and whole verses should mimic the syntax of the Hebrew, and…the vast web of allusions and wordplays present in the text should be somehow perceivable in the target language" (1995:x).

Unlike the translators of the KJV, who made use of a range of English synonyms, Buber and Rosenzweig preferred deliberate, multiple recurrences of the same words in order to recreate what Weissbort and Eysteinsson called the "verbal atmosphere" (2006:310) of the text. Buber discussed the use of this *leitwort* 'leading word' technique in a lecture delivered in 1927 when he stated the following:

> By Leitwort I understand a word or word root that is meaningfully repeated within the text or sequence of texts or complex of texts; those who attend to these repetitions will find a meaning of the text revealed, clarified, or at any rate made more emphatic…. Such measured repetition, corresponding to the inner rhythm of the text—or rather issuing from it—is probably the strongest of all techniques for making a meaning available without articulating it explicitly. (Buber and Rosenzweig 1994[1927]:166)

Elsewhere, Buber reiterated his point, this time emphasizing the originality of the work:

> The "Old Testament" has never before been translated by writers seeking to return to the concrete fundamental meaning of each individual word; previous translators have been contented to put down something "appropriate," something "corresponding."… We take seriously not only the text's semantic characteristics but also its acoustic ones. It became clear to us, accordingly, that the text's abundant alliterations and assonances could not be understood in aesthetic terms alone; often if not always it is passages of religious importance in which assonance and alliteration occur, and both assonance and alliteration thus help make this importance emerge more vividly. (Buber and Rosenzweig 1994[1927]:168)

The views of Buber and Rosenzweig share similarities with Schleiermacher and others who attempted to recreate a sense of the alien original. Their practical results were not necessarily successful, however, and it has been pointed out that interpreting Hebrew oral roots is a difficult task that inevitably leads to significant disagreement (Fox 1995:x). Although providing interesting insights into the possibilities of creating a verbal atmosphere, the efforts to preserve the "leading words" was somewhat extreme and perhaps for this reason, the concept does not seem to have been followed by later Bible translators.

3. The Linguistic Era

In the mid-twentieth century, a discernible shift in translation theory occurred, with the period heralded as a golden age for linguistic equivalence in translation theory. Most notable was Eugene Nida, whose thoughts proved influential to secular theorists as well as biblical scholars. Others working from a linguistic perspective included Roman Jakobson, Jiří Levý and J. C. Catford. Though initially popular, enthusiasm for linguistic equivalence would diminish later in the twentieth century.

3.1. Roman Jakobson

The literary theorist and linguist, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) was one of the founders of the influential Prague School of structural linguistics. In 1959, he wrote an essay titled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in which he introduced three notions called intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation, defined as follows:

> 1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
>
> 2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
>
> 3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (Jakobson 2004[1959]:139)

The second of these, interlingual translation, represents the traditional, historic understanding of translation, while the first approximates to a kind of loose paraphrase or imitation. But it was the third aspect, intersemiotic translation, which was the true innovation, with its concept of a semiotic process that went beyond words. As Snell-Hornby has pointed out, "What is significant for Translation Studies, as assessed from today's perspective, is however that he goes beyond language in the verbal sense and does not look merely across languages" (2006:21). This foreshadowed some contemporary work in intersemiotic translating and interpreting and provides potential input for audio/visual Bible translation work.

Indeed, such intersemiotic studies have become increasingly common among translation researchers who are likely to find interesting subjects in the development of Bible translations that incorporate non-verbal elements. An example would be children's Bibles where illustrations play a key role in the understanding of the original (the *Good News Bible* also features illustrations helping to convey information). In addition, the recent emergence of dramatic productions of the Bible, by artists such as Marquis Laughlin, could be said to involve intersemiotic attempts to render the meaning of the ST through non-verbal signs.

3.2. Jiří Levý

Also operating from the Prague School was the literary historian and translator Jiří Levý (1926–1967), whose best known writings are his 1963 Czech publication, *Umění Překladu* (The Art of Translation) and a 1967 English essay titled "Translation as a Decision Process." Levý's work has become increasingly admired as later theorists began to recognize that many subsequent ideas such as functionalism, relevance theory and "speakability" in drama translation could be found in embryonic form in his studies from the 1960s.

Although mainly working from the perspective of literary translation and the performing arts, many of Levý's ideas are relevant in other aspects of Translation Studies. He divided translation methodology into two categories—the "illusionist" and the "anti-illusionist." Illusionary translations, which he preferred, are those that are written as if they are originals, adapted to the target readership so they appear as literature from the target culture world itself. Anti-illusionary translation retains some features of the ST in order to inform the receiver that the document is a translation. In particular, Levý emphasized the need for aesthetic effect in translation so that the beauty of the original was refashioned in equivalent terms: "For the reader, then, the important feature of translation is not mechanical retention of form, but of its semantic and aesthetic values" (Levý 2006[1963]:342).

His writings shared similarities with Eugene Nida who, although working separately, came to similar conclusions about the importance of achieving sameness of effect among target readers. Perhaps surprisingly, he is rarely discussed in contemporary discussions of Bible translation theory, even among those advocating idiomatic or dynamic equivalence translations.

3.3. Eugene Nida

The American linguist Eugene Nida (1914–2011) is recognized as the most influential theorist in twentieth century Bible Translation and is best known for the concept of dynamic equivalence, later renamed

"functional equivalence." He began work on translation in the 1940s, but his theories on equivalence came to prominence only in the 1960s when he published full-scale, technical descriptions in two books, *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) and *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969). He differentiated between two types of equivalence: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence (later, "formal correspondence") attempts to reproduce ST surface structure as closely as possible, whereas the preferred dynamic equivalence attempts to reproduce the same reader response among target audience readers as that found among ST readers (Nida and Taber 1969:24).

Nida's model was founded upon Noam Chomsky's formulation of a generative-transformational grammar (1957), although Chomsky later warned against using his linguistic theory for translation: "The existence of deep-seated formal universals...implies that all languages are cut to the same pattern, but does not imply that there is any point by point correspondence between particular languages. It does not, for example, imply that there must be some reasonable procedure for translating between languages" (Chomsky 1965:30).

But by 1965, Nida had already found it useful, upon adaptation, as a foundation for an equivalence-based model of Bible translation. The earliest discernible clear statement of dynamic equivalence is found in "A New Methodology in Biblical Exegesis*"* (1952). This was followed by others, such as "Principles of Translation as Exemplified by Bible Translating*"* (1959); *Message and Mission* (1960); "Bible Translating and the Science of Linguistics" (1963); and, most importantly, *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964).

Chomsky, working from a linguistic perspective, believed that all languages held universal, underlying and cross compatible structural features. Sentences in a given language could be broken down into a series of related levels, each of which could be analyzed individually. His interest was in establishing the universal rules that govern the grammar and syntax of language, but Nida believed that the existence of deep-seated fundamentals could enable a scientific basis for translating between languages. He saw Chomsky's work as, "particularly important for a translator, for in translating from one language into another he must go beyond mere comparisons of corresponding structures and attempt to describe the mechanisms by which the total message is decoded, transferred, and transformed into the structures of another language" (Nida 1964:9).

In fact, Nida appropriated only part of Chomsky's model, simplifying it so that it might be used for the purposes of translation. He began by taking only the elements that related to analyzing and reconstructing sentences and reversed the order of method so that it could be used to theorize the transfer from one language to another:

> A generative grammar is based upon certain fundamental kernel sentences, out of which the language builds up its elaborate structure by various techniques of permutation, replacement, addition, and deletion. For the translator especially, the view of language as a generative device is important, since it provides him first with a technique for analyzing the process of decoding the source text, and secondly with the procedure for describing the generation of the appropriate corresponding expressions in the receptor language. (Nida 1964:60)

Nida simplified the multi-structure Chomsky model into just two structures, termed "deep structure" and "surface structure," and posited that the translator moves between them in the act of conveying meaning across languages. The deep structure is understood as the underlying feature of communication that contains all the semantic meaning in a given text. It is subject to transformational rules that are applied by a translator in order for it to be transferred across languages and when the transfer is complete, a set of phonological and morphemic rules are then applied in order to generate a surface structure (Nida 1964:57–69).

Figure 1 illustrates how the ST is analyzed at the surface level so that the deep structure can be identified before being transferred and restructured semantically and stylistically in an appropriate source language surface structure.

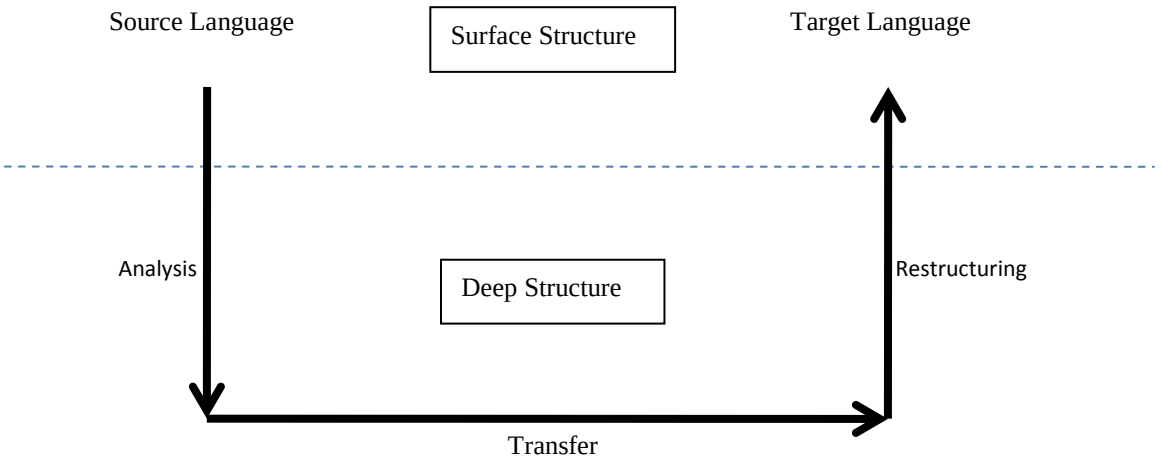

Figure 1: A depiction of Nida's model of translation.

The first factor is that the procedure must produce "a translation in which the message of the original text has been transported into the receptor language in such a way that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially that of the original readers" (Nida and Taber 1969:200). Thus, the translator must ascertain the likely effect of the ST upon the original readers and re-establish an equivalent effect upon the target audience by means of the target text.

The second important factor is that the restructuring should generate a surface structure that appears native to the target readership: "Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (Nida and Taber 1969:12).

Nida's preference was for dynamic equivalence, and his influence upon subsequent Bible translation efforts was enormous, as seen by a number of dynamic equivalence English translations, most notably the *Good News Bible*. Others include *The Living Bible*, *The Contemporary English Version*, *The New Living Translation* and *The New Century Version*. Kirk rightly observes, "Despite increasing criticism since the 1990s, [dynamic equivalence] continues to be the basis for most new Bible translation work, especially work in lesser-known languages" (2005:91).

3.4. J. C. Catford

In 1965, J. C. Catford (1917–2009) published *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, in which he attempted to use a Hallidayan and Firthian linguistic model as the basis for a general translation theory. He went further than Nida and others in adopting ideas and terminology from linguistics, insisting that, "the theory of translation is essentially a theory of applied linguistics" (Catford 1965:19). This sentiment appears to be somewhat restrictive for contemporary Bible translation studies, where a more interdisciplinary approach incorporating sociological and cultural concerns might be preferred.

Catford's definition of translation itself was not revolutionary, "a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another" (1965:1), but he introduced a number of definitions that divided and subdivided translation into various criteria. The most important of these was the idea of grammatical rank, where he added to the concept of equivalence by introducing the following two categories:

1. *Rank-bound translation*: here, each word or morpheme in the ST receives an equivalent TT word or morpheme, enabling precise exchange.
2. *Unbounded translation*: here, equivalence does not take place at the same level or rank but exchange can take place at the sentence, clause or other level.

Catford also introduced a distinction between formal correspondence[1] and textual equivalence. A formal correspondent is "any TL [target language] category (unit, class, structure) which can be said to occupy as nearly as possible the same place in the economy of the TL as the SL [source language] given category occupied in the SL" (Catford 1965:27). Since in the process of translating, a target language may not have a formal correspondent, a "shift" (1965:73) may take place whereby equivalence occurs at a more general level. The translator thus uses a textual equivalent defined as, "any target language text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion to be equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text" (Catford 1965:27).

Catford's work represented a detailed attempt to apply linguistic studies to translation theory in a systematic fashion. It is striking, though, that contemporary writers have almost unanimously dismissed his ideas, mostly because the theory was too prescriptive, overly one-dimensional (in that it operated mainly at the sentence level), and characteristic of the growing interest in machine translation in the 1960s which tended to oversimplify translation by ignoring cultural factors. Even by the 1980s, less than 20 years after it was published, one reviewer dismissed his book as "by and large of historical academic interest" (Henry 1984:157, cited in Munday 2008:61).

4. Towards Contemporary Translation Studies

Beginning in the 1970s, translation theorists began to move away from linguistic approaches and develop wider practices that viewed translation from social and political perspectives. These developments coincided with the "cultural turn" associated with the rise of interdisciplinary developments in the humanities and social sciences.

4.1. George Steiner

George Steiner's model of translation, the four-part "hermeneutic motion," is his best known contribution. It was a paradigm he developed in *After Babel: Aspects of language and translation*,[2] a book that generated huge interest in the decade or so after it was published but which receives much less interest today. Steiner's work incorporated studies in history, and hermeneutics which included new thoughts on a general theory of translation, notable for its philosophical approach that eschews the purely linguistics-oriented nature of much of translation theory in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, he recognized the growing interdisciplinary nature of the study of translation, commenting that, "the study of the theory and practice of translation has become a point of contact between established and newly evolving disciplines" (1975:250).

Steiner's key contribution to translation theory was in the form of a four step "hermeneutic motion" in which he set forth a description of translating as an activity. The four movements, or motions, are (1) *trust*, (2) *aggression*, (3) *incorporation*, and (4) *restitution* (1975:296–303). In this four step process, trust represents the initial confidence of the translator that there is something valuable in the ST to communicate to a new audience. Whether this happens consciously or unconsciously, Steiner argues that it is an essential part of the translation process, for without trust there would be no point in translating at all.

This is followed by aggression, where Steiner uses a mining metaphor to describe the extraction of material from another territory, in this case taking source language words and meaning out of a foreign text. Here, he invokes Saint Jerome's image of the ST meaning being led home captive by the translator, although Steiner chooses more aggressive terminology: "The translator invades, extracts, and brings home" (1975:298).

The third motion, incorporation, describes the translator's action of absorbing or assimilating the ST into the target language and culture. Also described as "embodiment", the sense here is of inclusion, digestion or incorporation, of whether the target culture is enriched by the source text, or is "infected" by it and so ultimately rejects it (1975:301).

[1] This is not the same as Nida's notion of formal correspondence (also known as formal equivalence).
[2] Originally published in 1975 and subsequently revised in several editions, the most recent in 1998.

Finally, restitution (or "compensation") describes the task of the translator in achieving a sense of fidelity or faithfulness in balancing the TT as a representation of the original, thereby enhancing the status of the source text. There is also the notion that the translator needs to make amends for the act of plunder that has taken place through the aggressive second motion. Steiner states that in this fourth motion, the translator "endeavors to restore the balance of forces, of integral presence, which his appropriative comprehension has disrupted" (1975:302). So important is this fourth motion that Steiner argues, "translation fails where it does not compensate" (1975:417). This comment appears somewhat overstated and perhaps too difficult to apply—how can a translator be sure that compensation has been achieved? Despite the undoubted significance of Steiner's work, it remains squarely within the sphere of philosophical studies of translation without providing much input into the subsequent work of Bible translators.

4.2. Functionalism and the Cultural Turn

The so-called "cultural turn" refers to a movement across the social sciences to incorporate matters of socio-cultural convention, history and context in conjunction with the development of cultural studies. Dating from around 1980, the "turn" saw a rejection of theories based on linguistic equivalence in favor of emphases on non-linguistic matters and cross-cultural interaction, so that translation theory, once seen as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics or literature studies, became identified with a new interdisciplinary approach. As Theo Hermans has commented,

> Translation used to be regarded primarily in terms of relations between texts, or between language systems. Today it is increasingly seen as a complex transaction taking place in a communicative, socio-cultural context. This requires that we bring the translator as a social being fully into the picture. (Hermans 1996:26)

The radical developments ushered in from this time are best summarized in the following statement by Edwin Gentzler:

> The two most important shifts in theoretical developments in translation theory over the past two decades have been (1) the shift from source-text oriented theories to target-text oriented theories and (2) the shift to include cultural factors as well as linguistic elements in the translation training models. Those advocating functionalist approaches have been pioneers in both areas. (2001:70)

By "source-text oriented theories" Gentzler refers to the linguistics-dominated notions of equivalence popular from the mid-twentieth century onwards, particularly Nida's theories propounded in the 1960s and 1970s; indeed, he devotes substantial pages to criticizing the concept of dynamic equivalence. By "target-text oriented theories," Gentzler is speaking about functionalist approaches such as skopos theory.[3] The "shift to include cultural factors" refers to the growing interdisciplinary approach of translation scholars mentioned above, who called for a shift of emphasis towards one that considered broader issues of social and cultural context. For Bible translation, the emergence of functionalist approaches should bring to the fore a wider variety of translations, better suited to the purpose of a given TT in a target culture.

4.2.1 Skopos Theory

The best known of the functionalist approaches is skopos theory, developed by Hans Vermeer in the late 1970s, skopos theory became the best known of the functionalist approaches. He and Katharina Reiss introduced it in their 1984 publication, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (Foundations of a General Theory of Translation). The single overriding rule was that a TT is determined by its function (Reiss and Vermeer 1984:119).

To functionalists, what makes a TT "good" is whether it is fit for purpose; in the words of Christiane Nord, "the ends justify the means" (1997:29). The primary aim of the translator is to fashion a TT that is functional in the target audience community; in terms of importance, achieving equivalence with the ST is

[3] Somewhat confusingly, Nida renamed dynamic equivalence as "functional equivalence" in 1986. The rebranding is not generally used in translation studies where 'functional' refers to a *target text* oriented methodology in contrast to dynamic equivalence, which is a *source text* oriented methodology.

therefore a lower priority. Famously, Vermeer described the ST as having been "dethroned"[4] (1986:42). The consequence of this is that there is no single "correct" translation: multiple purposes (skopoi) exist for translation. Since there are a potentially infinite number of target audiences for whom translation could be undertaken, there are also a potentially infinite number of skopoi. "If a text is to be functional for a certain person or group of persons, it has to be tailored to their needs and expectations. An "elastic" text intended to fit all receivers and all sorts of purposes is bound to be equally unfit for any of them, and a specific purpose is best achieved by a text specifically designed for this occasion" (Nord 2000:195).

Snell-Hornby observes, "This approach relativizes both text and translation: the one and only perfect translation does not exist, any translation is dependent on its skopos and its situation" (2006:52). The consequences, therefore, include an end to a longstanding debate over the best way to translate the Bible. A functionalist approach can close the longstanding discussion about the relative merits of formal equivalence (or formal correspondence) and dynamic equivalence. As noted by Gentzler,

> The emergence of a functionalist translation theory marks an important moment in the evolution of translation theory by breaking the two thousand year old chain of theory revolving round the faithful vs. free axis. Functionalist approaches can be either one or the other and still be true to the theory, as long as the approach chosen is adequate to the aim of the communication. (2001:71)

A number of debates continue within biblical studies regarding how translators should render the Bible: some advocate dynamic equivalence approaches (e.g., Scorgie et al. 2003), others formal equivalence (e.g., Ryken 2002), while elsewhere there are related discussions over inclusive language (e.g., Carson 1998). Each advocates that a particular approach represents the best method for translating the Bible, but under a functionalist approach any of these methodologies is "correct" provided it is understood and accepted as the purpose of the TT in the target community.

One final point must be emphasized: although skopos theory often results in free translation, this is not invariably the consequence of adopting a functionalist method. Even among Translation Studies scholars, this point is sometimes missed: Gentzler has erroneously remarked, "The only thing that functionalists seem to insist on is that the received text must be coherent, fluent, and natural" (Gentzler 2001:71). But fluency and naturalness of expression are not necessarily required: the range of possible functions enables literal or gloss translations: "one legitimate skopos might be an exact imitation of the ST syntax, perhaps to provide target culture readers with information about the syntax" (Vermeer 1989:229).

4.2.2 Relevance Theory

Ernst-August Gutt's 1991 publication, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* builds upon prior work by Sperber and Wilson (1986). Gutt's work takes a cognitive approach to translation and properly belongs to the field of psycholinguistics. Although relevance theory is presented here with functional approaches, some might argue that it is not strictly a functionalist theory—Gutt does not describe it as such. But it is target culture oriented and in that sense is broadly in line with functionalism even if its cognitive theoretical basis sets it apart from other concepts. Vermeer seems to place relevance theory within the functionalist framework, stating for example that it is best seen as "a subtheory of skopos theory" (1996:65).

In relevance theory, communication is seen as dependent on inferential processes, unlike Nida's theory which saw translation through encoding/decoding processes. A key point in relevance theory is that communication is seen as inferred and offered through a principle of relevance: maximum understanding with minimal processing effort. According to Gutt, "The central claim of relevance theory is that human communication crucially creates an expectation of optimal relevance, that is, an expectation on the part of the hearer that his attempt at interpretation will yield adequate contextual effects at minimal processing cost" (1991:30).

Gutt identifies two kinds of translation, indirect and direct, which are broadly akin to the free/literal dichotomy. Direct translation is where a TT "purports to interpretively resemble the original completely"

[4] Vermeer's wording in German is "Er ist entthront, die Translation dieser Fiktion enthoben."

(Gutt 1991:163), whereas indirect translation is more idiomatic and is seen as translation that "yields the intended interpretation without causing the audience unnecessary processing effort" (Gutt 1992:42). Yet given the space devoted to the problems associated with unnecessary processing effort, one might imagine that Gutt's translational preference was for indirect (idiomatic) translation. In fact, he surprisingly advocates direct translation, even though such a literal-style approach would naturally invoke more processing cost.

This is a surprising viewpoint but is not in itself a theoretical problem, for a translator could still adopt the theory with a preference for indirect translation. The problems come elsewhere, and what seems to be missing in the work is what lies beyond the psycholinguistic viewpoint of *how* people tend to communicate. So far as Gutt's writings stand, there is little in terms of practical value: he supports direct translation, but as Smith points out, "to my knowledge he never attempted to spell out what a direct translation should look like" (2008:170).

Wendland has commented that relevance theory "is seriously deficient with respect to offering the necessary concrete guiding principles (and their associated contextual effects) when it comes to dealing with specific translation problems" (1996:127). Similarly, it has been said that, "if they [translators] want direct help with their everyday concerns, they should not expect to find it here" (Malmkjær 1992:306).

The theoretical basis itself has also been questioned where the central concern around processing effort has been seen as too subjective to measure or assess: "The difficulty with this entire notion remains: It is a criterion that is itself too *relative*, for how can it be assessed and by whom?… How does one determine the relative degree of mental *effort* involved during communication—and hence 'relevance' in this concomitant respect?" (Wendland 1996:127–128).

Relevance theory enjoys some popularity today among Bible translators—far more than among their secular counterparts—probably as a result of Gutt's leading role within a major Bible translation organization, but a more practical perspective to the use of the theory would be an advantage to Bible translation work. A helpful advance from the perspective of Bible translation is that his work has encouraged a more TT oriented approach to translation, thereby helping to bring about a fundamentally different approach to the task of translating the Bible.

4.2.3 Descriptive Translation Studies

Whereas Vermeer focused on the *production* of translations, another theorist, Gideon Toury, emphasized the *description* of translations. He approached the study of translation from the perspective of systematic descriptive analysis. His belief was that a general theory of translation can only be developed on the basis of descriptive study of translational phenomena as an empirical task; his views are best summarised in his 1995 book, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*.

Like functionalist theorists, Toury took a target-oriented approach to translation, believing that translations are empirical phenomena which arise in the literary "polysystem" of the culture in which they exist. The polysystem concept originated in the 1970s with Itamar Even-Zohar (1979), who conceived of it as an aggregate of literary systems and a means to account for the way in which literature involves a given culture. The relevance for this section is that Toury adopted the polysystem concept for defining translation norms and recognized in it a cultural element to understanding translation.

Although Toury avoided taking a prescriptive approach his descriptive analysis of translation had much in common with skopos theorists such as Vermeer and Reiss, which is interesting given that their work in the early 1980s appears to have been produced independently and at around the same time. Writing from the perspective of the equivalence era, he commented that translation theories often "are ST-oriented and, more often than not, even SL-oriented" (Toury 1980:35). What was novel was the idea of identifying social norms and literary conventions in the target culture thereby enabling TTs to be shaped by them.

Toury's work on Translation Studies remains highly influential, perhaps more so in secular studies where his work originated. The value for Bible translation would be in continued research aimed at identifying norms or other social conventions found among target readers. This, in turn, should help to produce translation better aimed at serving the needs of those audiences.

4.2.4 Foreignisation and Postcolonial Studies

Against the backdrop of a perceived perception that literary works were almost universally domesticated, Lawrence Venuti forcefully argued that target cultures would be better served with foreignising translations (those that make explicit the foreign nature of the ST). He published his concerns in two widely circulated books, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995) and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998).

Of course, foreignisation has been advocated previously in translation history, as Venuti himself points out by tracing the origin of his thoughts to Schleiermacher (Venuti 2008:19). Like others before him, Venuti understands foreignisation as a deliberate, discursive translation strategy of breaking target culture customs by retaining a sense of the "otherness" of a source text. It sets out to disrupt target conventions with a translated text that informs the reader of the foreignness of the original. In so doing, Venuti eschews the tendency to praise translations that read smoothly or fluently:

> The popular aesthetic requires fluent translations that produce the illusory effect of transparency, and this means adhering to the current standard dialect while avoiding any dialect, register, or style that calls attention to words as words and therefore preempts the reader's identification. As a result, fluent translation may enable a foreign text to engage a mass readership, even a text from an excluded foreign literature, and thereby initiate a significant canon reformation. But such a translation simultaneously reinforces the major language and its many other linguistic and cultural exclusions while masking the inscription of domestic values. Fluency is assimilationist, presenting to domestic readers a realistic representation inflected with their own codes and ideologies as if it were an immediate encounter with a foreign text and culture. (Venuti 1998:12)

Unlike former proponents of foreignisation, Venuti takes an aggressive line in promoting foreignising translations, adopting expressions from the history of racial segregation and ethnic relations to describe the practice of domesticating foreign texts and foreign cultures into Western culture. For him, the problem with domestication is not just the minimizing of the strangeness of a source text, but also about ethical issues concerning the forcible exclusion of the foreign: Hermans has observed of the word "domestication," that "the term is aptly chosen, suggesting both smugness and forcible taming" (2009:98). Venuti should be seen as adding an ethical slant to eighteenth and nineteenth century supporters of foreignisation (note the subtitle to his 1998 book: *Towards an Ethics of Difference*). In this manner, he follows Antoine Berman, who in an article in the 1980s criticized a general tendency in literary translation to negate the foreign. "The properly ethical aim of the translating act," says Berman "is receiving the foreign as foreign" (2000[1985]:285–286).

Through the influence of Venuti, translation scholars today recognize the domestication vs. foreignisation debate as a central concern in the field. Introductory textbooks (e.g., Munday 2008) feature substantial sections discussing his work, but recognition of his views is not the same as adoption of his principles, and criticisms about the practicality and testability of foreignisation have been made (Pym 1996:171–174). Furthermore, Venuti tends to present an "all or nothing" approach to translation, whereby the only valid translation strategy is foreignisation. Functionalists would argue that foreignising translation is valid only where there is a perceived target culture purpose; in places where domesticating translations are required or desired, rendering a foreignising translation cannot be justified.

In Translation Studies, the acceptance of research covering social, psychological and political factors became increasingly common during the 1990s. Leo Hickey remarked that, "It is also becoming clear that, as in any other form of rewriting… [translation] implies manipulation and relates directly to ideology, power, value systems and perceptions of reality" (1998:1). These questions over manipulation and power systems coincided with increasing interest in the interface between Translation Studies and postcolonial studies. This work has relevance for Bible translation where much of the activity takes place in so-called minority cultures but translation of the style approved by Venuti, with its ethical component demanding a rejection of domestication, is less helpful. The fact remains that idiomatic, or domesticating, translations are needed, used and readily adopted by many target cultures. Concerns over translator "invisibility" are likewise of lower concern for Bible translators who are less likely to view a TT as having equal status with the ST.

The area of postcolonial approaches to Translation Studies overlaps with those of Venuti and others who support foreignising strategies. Gentzler has commented as follows:

> Rather than using translation as a tool to support and extend a conceptual system based upon Western philosophy and religion, postcolonial translators are seeking to reclaim translation and use it as a strategy of resistance, one that disturbs and displaces the construction of images of non-Western cultures rather than reinterpret them using traditional, normalized concepts and language. (Gentzler 2001:176)

The key lines of enquiry in postcolonial translation theory include an examination of how translation is practiced in former colonial cultures; how the works of writers from former colonies are translated; and the historical role played by translation in the process of colonization.

In Bible translation, postcolonial approaches have been studied by Rasiah Sugirtharajah who argues that the British and Foreign Bible Society's distribution of Bible translations served as a kind of colonial tool, used to "inculcate" Western values and customs (2001:63). Similarly, Hephzibah Israel, in discussing nineteenth-century Tamil Bible translations, contends that aside from bringing Scripture into the local vernacular, the objective of missionaries was to create a Protestant identity for Indian converts (2006:270). In both cases, there is a view that translation goes beyond a neutral activity and becomes an active agent in colonial suppression. Some of these conclusions might be overstated, such as Sugirtharajah's insistence that the KJV was used to invoke nationalistic tendencies through its use by the British as a means of imposing Christian morality and biblical civilization (2002:135–148). It is questionable whether the English Bible was used to this extent throughout all of the British Empire, and at least not through all its history. There is, for example, little evidence of the usage of the English Bible as a tool of education in colonial Hong Kong.

The difference between postcolonial translators and advocates of foreignisation is that the former prefer resistant translations as a means to counter the imbalance of power relations between colonizer and colonised. In contrast, supporters of foreignisation are typically seeking to educate the reader by emphasizing the foreignness of the source culture by rendering a text in a manner that makes its origins conspicuous.

For Bible translation, postcolonial approaches are likely to elicit very contrasting opinions among practitioners and reviewers. From a functionalist perspective, it is difficult to agree that translation must always be produced according to postcolonial ideologies, since this would assume that all readers desire translations that are moulded and written with postcolonial ideology in mind. This is especially the case given the evident success of both dynamic and formal equivalence translations throughout the former colonies.

5. Conclusion

Translation theory in the twentieth century is marked by the emergence in its early years of philosophical approaches endorsed by individuals such as Ezra Pound and Walter Benjamin but by the 1950s, a discernible development emerged from the perspective of applied linguistics. The golden age of linguistics-based translation theory then followed, with a flurry of new terms, concepts and techniques in the 1950s and 1960s; in Bible translation, the most notable scholar was Eugene Nida whose work gained influence beyond biblical studies. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, researchers began adopting ideas from other disciplines in the social sciences, and the "cultural turn" coincided with the development of functionalist approaches in translation theory. The most notable of these was skopos theory, subsequently expanded and developed by other scholars working from a functionalist perspective.

The latter half of the twentieth century brought an impressive body of research in what is now known as Translation Studies, mapped and organized by James Holmes. On this emergence of Translation Studies, it has been said:

> The study of translation in its manifold forms is now a well-established field of scholarly activity. Once seen as a homeless hybrid at best, and later as an interdisciplinary area best approached through its neighbouring disciplines (e.g., theoretical and applied linguistics, discourse analysis, literary study,

> comparative literature), it has now achieved full recognition as a discipline in its own right, to which related disciplines make vital contributions. (Malmkjær and Windle 2011:1)

Today, the discipline incorporates a wide spectrum of research with many translation theorists regarding their work as interdisciplinary and intercultural, borrowing heavily from such areas as linguistics, literature studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, anthropology, psychology, and political science.

This article thus closes with two suggestions for Bible translators: first, to seek to understand the practice of Bible translation from the wider perspective of Translation Studies, thereby incorporating ideas from secular researchers, and second, to undertake a functionalist approach to translation where the form of the TT (for example, such as whether it is idiomatic or literal, gender inclusive or gender specific) is determined by the needs of the target audience.

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