

The Likɔɔnl¹ New Testament²

Within *Skopostheorie* a **translation error** is defined as

- “anything that obstructs the purpose” (Nord 1997, 74).
- “a failure to carry out the instructions implied in the brief” (75).
- an inadequate solution to a translation problem

Note: This definition of error has a powerful relational caveat that is the ethical constraint of loyalty (see below). It is important that the definition is contextually defined (not static).

Functional Typology of Translation problems arranged hierarchially (Nord 1997, 75).

Pragmatic translation problems are the most important. They depend on extra-textual factors which are described in the translation brief. I highlighted six components of pragmatic error from within Nord’s description: translation type, sender specific features of the original author, sender or receiver orientation of the translation functional unit, sender specific features of time, medium and place.

Cultural translation problems are culture specific norms and conventions. I identified five types of cultural translation problems in Nord’s writing: translation conventions, text layout conventions, genre conventions, poetic conventions, measurement conventions, and non-verbal behavior. In instrumental translation cultural problems are ranked on par with pragmatic problems.

Linguistic translation problems occur when there are mistakes in language structure such as vocabulary, syntax, or supra-segmental features like discourse markers. Typically, **Nord grades these errors as lower level errors**, however, if these errors affect the function or offend the audiences preferences such that a translation’s function is affected then these errors are raised up in importance. Note that linguistic problems often receive a disproportionate amount of time, energy and resources in comparison to research into crucial pragmatic issues like medium.

Text specific translation problems are isolated to a particular source text: figures of speech, neologisms, or puns.

Special features of literary translations The description Nord offers for literary translation include: hermeneutical interpretation, text function (see Jakobson 1960), cultural distance, form and effect, fictional characters, and intonation and focus.

¹ The Likɔɔnl language (Komba) is a Gurma language of Northern Ghana, part of the macro language family of Likpakpaaln (Konkomba). The people are called Bikɔɔm while the speech variety is Likɔɔnl.

² The Translation Brief for the Likɔɔnl New Testament is available online:
http://www.lbt.org/papers/technical/Komba_Translation_Brief.pdf

The research purpose is to measure the presentation of text signs in the printed Likɔɔnl New Testament by comparing the translation decisions to the translation instructions in the translation brief. I limited my scope to the book of Philemon.

The research goal is to identify and grade translation errors in the book of Philemon based on the hierarchy of translation problems in *Skopostheorie*.

The research question: What is the severity of “translation errors” in the Likɔɔnl New Testament in the *Skopostheorie* framework?

The **concepts** for measurement are the types of translation problems listed above.

The **indicators** are underlined next to the descriptions in the hierarchy of translation problems above.

For each indicator there should be an **instrument** or a tool to help measure the indicator. The instrument contains **probes** which are “the actual data collection components that make up the Instrument (Nahhas, Keltall, Mann 2011). For each probe there must be **criteria** that lead to answering to the Research Question. It is helpful to decide ahead of time what the answer to a criteria will mean in relation to the research question. So for instance, I indicate that a “yes” answer means that there is a possible translation error, and a “no” answer would indicate that there is no translation error.

Before assigning “error” the researcher must also consider **the ethical constraint of loyalty**. Within *Skopostheorie*, this constraint to be loyal to the source author and host audience trumps the instructions of the translation brief.

The *Skopoi* of the Likɔɔnl New Testament

Primary goal: The host text is to be a written text read aloud in church services, funerals, marriages, baptisms or naming ceremonies, Bible studies, and other specialized church situations.

Secondary goal: The host text will serve as a symbol and motivator for ethnic and cultural uplift and unity in churches, communities and schools. It should be similar in form and style to other Ghanaian translations.

Tertiary goal: The host text should be suitable to be read aloud for mass media formats and lend itself to be further adapted for other oral and recorded media.

Example of an instrument measuring Pragmatic problem of translation type.

The Likoonl translation brief calls for a homologous instrumental translation. So the translation should analogously translate the communicative functions of the host text. Here I am trying to ascertain how the host text achieves this goal and where it might fall short.

Number	Bible Ref	description	1	2	3	comments
			Adopted As is? Y/N	If 1 is Y, was this adequate?	If 1 is N, was it domesticated adequately?	
			Y = 2 N=3	Y= good N=error	Y = good N = error	Explain error analysis
1.	PH 1-2	author/ addressee convention	Y	Y		source convention adopted, with slight adjustment to receptor
2.	PH 1	prisoner	Y	Y		strange for Paul, as a Christian to be a prisoner, handled in introduction.
3.	PH 2	fellow soldier	Y	N		some may not realize metaphorical usage, an adjustment could have been made while retaining the metaphor
4.	PH2	church in your house	Y	N		The concept of house church is not explained.
	PH 25	your spirits	Y		N	This seems to be a bit of Christian-ese. the conventions is familiar because of church culture in English. Not very natural Komba.

The table has identified two potential translation errors. #3, #4, and #38. I think both of them could have been avoided, but probably do not rank too high in terms of mistaking the translation type.

The **Next steps** for the development of instruments that measure translation error

- ▶ Streamline the tools so they can be used with different translation briefs
- ▶ Perhaps it could be used as a tool to help improve quality on a book by book basis
- ▶ Could help pinpoint ethical dilemmas and further edit the brief

Ethical considerations

- ▶ Error in *my* translation?
- ▶ Too much consistency?
- ▶ Language and Cultural power issues in deciding about translation type
- ▶ Shared responsibility in ethical decisions
- ▶ Is transparency good?
- ▶ The brief as mitigating colonial bombs?

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